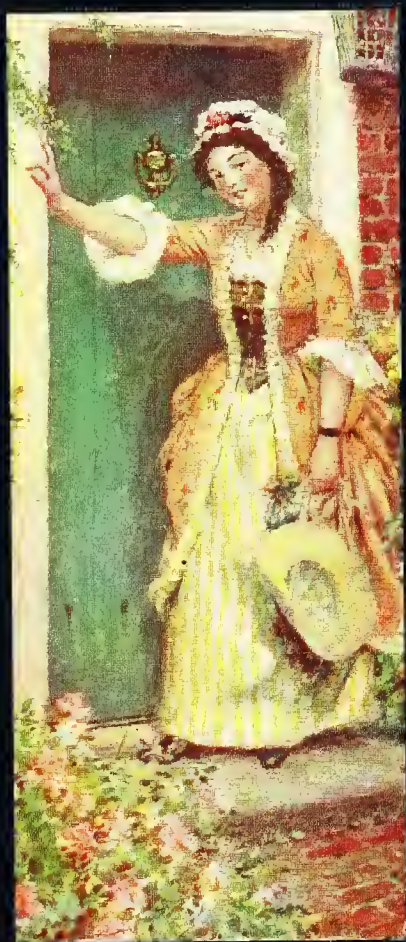
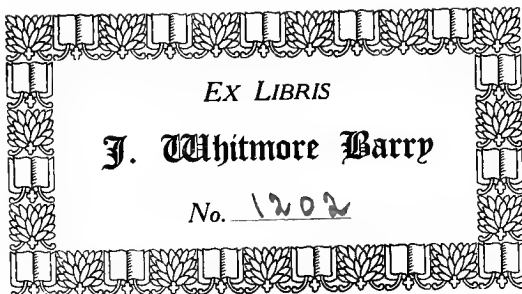


# THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD

## A PLAY



MARGUERITE MERINGTON



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*FOUNDED ON OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S NOVEL*

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*"I thought thee lost, my Olivia."*







# THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD: A PLAY

*FOUNDED ON OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S NOVEL*

BY  
MARGUERITE MERINGTON

*Author of "Cranford: A Play," "Captain  
Lettarblair," etc.*



NEW YORK  
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

1909

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## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

### THE PRIMROSE FAMILY

DR. PRIMROSE (THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD)—“ *Unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth: A priest, a husbandman, and the father of a family.*”

MRS. PRIMROSE—“ *A good-natured, notable woman—An excellent contriver in housekeeping.*”

GEORGE—“ *No one was ever born with a better knack of hoping.*”

OLIVIA—“ *Now about eighteen, had that luxuriancy of beauty, open, sprightly, and commanding.*”

SOPHIA—“ *Features not so striking at first . . . but soft, modest, and alluring.*”

MOSES—“ *Quite happy at being permitted to dispute.*”

DICK AND BILL—“ *My little ones.*”

### THE WILMOTS

DR. WILMOT—“ *A dignitary in the Church.*”

ARABELLA—“ *Fortune her smallest accomplishment . . . completely pretty. Her youth, health and innocence heightened by such a happy sensibility.*”

## THE FLAMBOROUGHES

MR. FLAMBOROUGH—(A PROSPEROUS FARMER).  
*"Our honest neighbour," and his six children, beginning with his "two daughters, flaunting with red top-knots."*

FARMER WILLIAMS—*A young man "in easy circumstance, prudent and sincere."*

SIR WILLIAM THORNHILL—(MR. BURCHELL).  
*"About thirty. His person was well-formed, his face marked with lines of thinking—short and dry in his address—seemed not to understand ceremony, or to despise it. One of the most generous yet whimsical men in the kingdom."*

SQUIRE THORNHILL—*"A young gentleman of genteel appearance—address confident, easy—desired to know little more of the world than its pleasures."*

THE TWO "LADIES OF QUALITY"—*"Women of the town masquerading as Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs."*

EPHRAIM JENKINSON—*"A knowing man—with a thorough knowledge of human nature on the wrong side."*

THE LANDLORD AND LANDLADY OF THE SIGN OF THE HARROW—*"A wayside public house."*  
A servant in the Thornhill liveries.

## ACT I

Living-room in the Vicar's cottage, in some rural part of England. Early autumn.

## ACT II

The same scene, some weeks later.

## ACT III

The same scene, the day after.

## ACT IV

A room in The Sign of the Harrow, a public house on the road to London. Some weeks later.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

A prison cell.

### SCENE II

Outside the Vicar's cottage at Xmastide.

Costumes, setting, music, etc., are of the period—the time of Oliver Goldsmith—between 1728 and 1744. The play is divided into five Acts because Goldsmith so arranged his own comedies. For simplicity's sake, however, the old-fashioned mode of subdividing Acts into scenes with change of environment has been followed only at the close.





## PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY THE GHOST OF DR. JOHNSON.

The Ghost rises from the stage in a gray mist. The mist dispels, and the Ghost addresses the audience with occasional references to imaginary presences near him.

Who stands before you, do ye question? What!  
Two centuries, and then are we forgot?  
I am that Johnson who did once compile  
A Dictionary—Is it out of style?

O playgoers, ye living, modern host,  
Bear with a word from an old-fashioned ghost!  
I come to speak for Goldsmith, Oliver,  
Dear Noll—Eh! What's that? I deny it, sir!  
(’Tis Mr. Garrick, in the distance dim,)  
Too great, O Davy, to belittle him!  
But, you, Sir Joshua, with wondrous art  
Who painted him, you knew dear Goldie’s heart,  
His kindly spirit, innocent of guile,  
His Irish Irishness, his winning smile!

*[Pauses to take snuff.]*

Foibles, in sooth, had he: he never learned  
To husband guineas he so hardly earned,

Loved gay apparel that his means outran—  
Yet ne'er bloom-coloured coat clothed better man!  
Ever compassionate to want, distress,  
His lavish hand would leave him penniless.

Too late, alas! for him his attic stair  
Tho' fortune climbed, he left the world his heir!  
Vast his humaneness, not unkind his scorn,  
His pen touched nothing it did not adorn.  
What! Dead two centuries, yet makes ye laugh  
And weep to-day? 'Tis his best epitaph!

THE GHOST SINKS IN A GRAY MIST.

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE FOR ACTS I, II AND III, ALSO FOR  
ACT V, SCENE 2.

“Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little enclosures, the elms and hedgerows appearing with inexpressible beauty. My house consisted of but one storey, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness. The walls on the inside were nicely white-washed. The same room served us for parlour and kitchen. It was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates and coppers being well scoured, and disposed in bright rows on the shelves.”

At the back is a door, opening into the front garden. It has a knocker on the outside. At the back, and at the left are windows framed with vines, and having curtains. There are plants in pots upon the sills. On the right (R 1) is an opening without a door, leading to the scullery. Also on the right (R 2) is a door, leading to the bedrooms. Elsewhere are a fireplace, with mantelpiece, china closet, dresser, screen, settee, table, chairs, cricket, book-shelf, tall clock, and all other necessary furnishings. On the walls are silhouettes, samplers, pictures, and Mrs. Primrose's epitaph, framed, also a looking-glass.



## ACT I



## ACT I

*Sounds of pipe and tabour.*

DISCOVERED: *The VICAR OF WAKEFIELD and his family, being welcomed by MR. FLAMBOROUGH, FARMER WILLIAMS, and other parishioners, including the MISSES FLAMBOROUGH. By the open door, rear, stand musicians with pipe and tabour. The VICAR wears his usual aspect of benevolence. MRS. PRIMROSE is divided between hospitality and disdain. OLIVIA'S expression is slightly condescending, SOPHIA'S rather less so. MOSES is interested, GEORGE aloof, the children show pleasure.*

VICAR.

[*Addressing the welcoming group.*] From my heart, sir, on behalf of Mrs. Primrose and our children, thank you!

FLAMBOROUGH.

Your servant, Doctor. As I was saying, you will find us a simple folk, but pious. We keep up the Xmas carol.

VILLAGERS.

Aye, that we do!

FLAMBOROUGH.

We send true-love-knots on Valentine morning; eh, lads and lasses?

VILLAGERS.

[*With laughter, sheepish, or teasing.*] Aye, that we do!

FLAMBOROUGH.

We eat pancakes on Shrovetide; eh, neighbours?

VILLAGERS.

Aye, farmer! That we do!

FLAMBOROUGH.

We show our wit on the First of April! eh, boys and girls?

VILLAGERS.

[*With guffaws.*] Aye, sir; that we do!

FLAMBOROUGH.

And we crack nuts religiously on Michaelmas Eve! eh, friends?

VILLAGERS.

Aye, Mr. Flamborough! That we do!

FLAMBOROUGH.

Come, then! Here's a hearty welcome to the Vicar of Wakefield! [*Waving hat.*]

VILLAGERS.

Hear, hear!

[*Demonstration with hats, sticks, etc. Flourish of pipe and tabour, the VICAR bows thanks with emotion, his family with courteous acknowledgment. The villagers, led by FLAMBOROUGH, go to the music of pipe and tabor. The PRIMROSE family alone remain.*]



OLIVIA.

[*Mimicking.*] Aye, Mr. Flamborough! That we do!  
Oh, what rustics!

VICAR.

My child! Most kindly souls! And Farmer Flamborough—a most worthy man!

DICK.

Aye, papa! See the cakes he brought us!

BILL

And oranges!

[*DICK and BILL run off, following villagers.*]

MOSES.

[*Has been gazing out of window.*] His daughters me-thought well-favoured!

SOPHIA.

[*Taxing MOSES.*] Oh, Moses! Those blowsy, bouncing pieces with cheeks as broad and red as pulpit cushions!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

And from these yokels my sons must choose their wives, my girls their husbands!

MOSES.

Speaking of husbands, mother, did you note how that young farmer stared at sister Livy?

OLIVIA.

Thanks, brother! No country booby for me! When I go to church——

VICAR.

May it be with so worthy a man! Come, children, be not censorious! Rather let us give thanks that——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Thanks! When I think of our elegant mansion at Wakefield! And here—parlour and kitchen all in one!

VICAR.

All the warmer and more snug, my dear! [*Interrupts MRS. PRIMROSE, who is about to protest.*] Come, come! Even at Wakefield did we not have our humiliations? Think how often the Squire slept through my best sermons; how his wife returned your obeisance with a mutilated curtsy! In spite of reverses at least we still enjoy the approbation of our consciences, and one another's love!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Nevertheless——

[*DICK and BILL run on, rear, exclaiming.*]

DICK AND BILL.

Oh, papa! Mamma! See the fine coach coming down the road!

[*MRS. PRIMROSE and daughters run to window and door and look off.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Alack! Whenever will a fine coach stop at our door again?

OLIVIA AND SOPHIA.

But it is—it is stopping here!

[*General excitement.*]

MOSES.

[*Also looking off.*] Now, by Socrates, they are the Wilmot liveries!

[*More general excitement.*]

GEORGE.

[*For the first time interested, starts up.*] The Wilmot liveries, say you?

[*Runs to window, looks off.*]

VICAR.

[*With emotion.*] Doubtless my old friend Mr. Wilmot is come to condole with me on my misfortune! How like him!

GEORGE.

Also the lovely Arabella, come to tell me that in spite of our reverses she is true to me! Oh, rapture!

[*There is a general bustle of preparation. MOSES has hardly closed the front door before there is a loud double knock on it. He is about to open it again, but is warned by signs from his mother and sisters to delay till they are ready. He then admits DR. WILMOT and ARABELLA, on seeing whom the PRIM-ROSES, with the exception of the VICAR, exclaim with feigned surprise.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*And her children.*] Mr. Wilmot—of all people in the world! And—I declare—Miss Arabella.

VICAR.

[*Advances with outstretched hand.*] Mr. Wilmot—old friend—this is indeed kind!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Apoplectic with wrath.*] Kind, sir! Kind! You call it——

[*Sputters, unable to finish.*]

GEORGE.

Oh, Miss Wilmot! This is too much!

ARABELLA.

Oh, Mr. Primrose! [*With blushing rapture.*] George!  
[*George is about to embrace her.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Back, sir! How dare you, Miss! [*Furiously interposing, with stick.*] Back, sir, or I'll—I'll——

VICAR.

Dr. Wilmot, sir—this choler! Explain yourself!

DR. WILMOT.

I explain myself, Dr. Primrose? Gad, sir; it is to you that I am come for explanations!

ARABELLA.

Papa! Pray, calm yourself!

[DR. WILMOT, *soothed by* ARABELLA, *sits, a chair being placed for him by* MOSES, *and a glass of wine being offered him by* MRS. PRIMROSE. *At last he finds breath.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Dr. Primrose, can you deny that for months you and I have been carrying on by correspondence a controversy at once spirited and scholarly, in which I have distinctly had the better of you!

VICAR.

[*With spirit.*] Pardon, Dr. Wilmot! Spirited and scholarly, I grant you. But that you had the better of me? No, sir! I deny it!

[DR. WILMOT *speechless with wrath.*]

ARABELLA.

[*Soothing him.*] Papa! I beg——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Calming the* VICAR.] Charles, my love! Consider!

DR. WILMOT.

At least, sir, you will admit that the bone of our erudite contention was——

VICAR.

Monogamy, sir! With Whiston, I hold it unlawful for a priest of the Church of England to take to himself more than one wife!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Agreeing.*] At a time, sir! Agreed! One at a time, but——

VICAR.

At any time, sir! Ever! One wife till death do part.

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Charles, my love, I entreat you——

DR. WILMOT.

[*Flourishing stick.*] Hear him! Egad, sir——

ARABELLA.

Dear, dear papa, I implore you——

VICAR.

Moreover, sir, in support of my tenets I have published tracts—tracts which——

DR. WILMOT.

Which nobody reads! Ha, ha, ha!

ARABELLA.

Oh, sir!

VICAR.

Furthermore, I have already composed my wife's epitaph.

DR. WILMOT.

[*Staring.*] Your wife's epitaph!

VICAR.

[*Pointing to framed epitaph.*] Setting forth that I chose her as she chose her wedding gown, less for the lustre of its surface than for its wearing qualities.

[*MRS. PRIMROSE, who had looked pleased at mention of epitaph, coughs, slightly nettled.*]

VICAR.

[*Continuing.*] Extolling her prudence, thrift, obedience to me, and——

DR. WILMOT.

Aye, aye, sir! But—which wife?

VICAR.

[*Horried at the question.*] Which, Dr. Wilmot? Deborah, the *only* wife of Charles Primrose, God bless her!

[*Pats MRS. PRIMROSE on shoulder.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Splutters with laughter.*] Ridiculous!

ARABELLA.

Oh, Papa! Indeed, Dr. Primrose——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Nettled.*] Not at all ridiculous, Dr. Wilmot!

VICAR.

Ridiculous? In my wife's name, Dr. Wilmot, I demand an apology.

DR. WILMOT.

No offence, Mrs. Primrose! I withdraw the word! For Gad, sir; it is not ridiculous! It's insulting! Insulting to me!

VICAR.

How, sir! Insulting?

DR. WILMOT.

[*Continuing.*] When, as everybody knows, I have buried three beloved wives!

VICAR.

Scandalous, sir!

[*The PRIMROSES try to soothe VICAR.*]

DR. WILMOT.

In succession, mark you!

VICAR.

Scandalous!

DR. WILMOT.

Eh, sir? Gad, sir; that is libellous!

GEORGE.

By heaven, Dr. Wilmot, were you a younger man——

[*The PRIMROSES restrain GEORGE.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Flourishing stick.*] Puppy! Presumptuous puppy!



ARABELLA.

[*With a shriek.*] Papa! George!—Oh, heavens!

[*Appears to swoon. GEORGE catches her.*]

THE PRIMROSES.

Miss Wilmot has fainted. Water! Air! Cut her stays open! Burn a feather under her nose!

GEORGE.

Oh, my Arabella! Tell me—tell me you are not dead!

DR. WILMOT.

Puppy! Let go of her! Here, Miss! How dare you faint on the monogamous breast of a Primrose! Throw a bucket of water over her! I warrant she'll come to, fast enow!

ARABELLA.

[*Opening eyes.*] Where am I?—Oh, papa! Oh, George!

DR. WILMOT.

Silence, Miss. I forbid you to George that puppy! But, come. As to our controversy, I trust, Dr. Primrose, you will admit that you agreed to a public threshing out of the matter?

VICAR.

Agreed to it, Dr. Wilmot? It was I who suggested it!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Testily.*] Well, well, be that as it may! The loser was to pay a forfeit—now, what was it?

[*GEORGE looks conscious.*]

ARABELLA.

Lud, sir! Don't you recall?

[*Whispers to* DR. WILMOT.]

GEORGE.

Dr. Wilmot—my attachment for your daughter—which I fondly hope is not without return——

ARABELLA.

[*Bashfully.*] Oh, George!

DR. WILMOT.

To be sure!—Your son; my daughter—Dr. Primrose, you admit that the loser was to double the sum of one thousand pounds that each of us had agreed to settle on the young couple!

VICAR.

Admit it, sir? 'Twas I propounded it!

DR. WILMOT.

Then, sir, the less excuse for your taking refuge in flight!

VICAR.

[*Amazed and angry.*] Flight, Dr. Wilmot! Surely——

DR. WILMOT.

No evasion, Dr. Primrose! On my way to keep the appointment, by the merest accident I learn that you and your family, root, stem, and branch, have left Wakefield, and are in hiding here!

VICAR.

In hiding! Really, Dr. Wilmot——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Charles, love! Forbear——

THE OTHER PRIMROSES.

[*At the same time.*] Papa! Pray——!

ARABELLA.

[*At the same time.*] Dear Papa! Indeed——

DR. WILMOT.

At least, Dr. Primrose, you will not deny that you are here?

VICAR.

The fact is self-evident, sir. As for flight—surely, Dr. Wilmot, you received my letter?

GEORGE.

[*To ARABELLA.*] And you, madam, did you not receive the outpourings of my broken—[*Hand on heart.*]

[*DR. WILMOT and ARABELLA show puzzled surprise.*]

VICAR.

Doubtless you set out ere it reached you. I wrote, informing you that the merchant in town in whose hands I had lodged my entire fortune, has gone off to avoid a suit in bankruptcy—has not a shilling to the pound! At Wakefield I had always turned over my emoluments to the poor! Accordingly, to save my family from beggary, I

have accepted this small rural cure, at sixteen pounds a year!

[DR. WILMOT and ARABELLA have punctuated this sentence with exclamations of surprise and sympathy.]

DR. WILMOT.

[Wiping brow.] Sixteen pounds a year!

MOSES.

Which we shall increase by husbandry!

GEORGE.

I, too, sir, set out this very night for London, there to make my fortune!

DR. WILMOT.

Tut, tut! [*Blows nose to conceal emotion.*] Charles Primrose, you are in misfortune——

[*Rises, opens arms.*]

VICAR.

Wilmot! [*They embrace.*] This tenderness overcomes me! [*Wipes eyes.*]

[*Everyone shows emotion.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Your emotion does you credit, sir! Gad, sir, it does us all credit! But why the deuce are you young people hanging back! Egad, Master George, when I was your age——

GEORGE.

Sir, while the lovely person of Miss Wilmot was ever

sole object of my desire, yet considering the disparity in our present fortunes——

DR. WILMOT.

La, La, La, boy! Arabella has enough for both! Take her, George! Go to him, daughter!—Nay, lad; never be dashed by her coyness! The more they hang back——

GEORGE.

Arabella!

ARABELLA.

Oh, Papa!—Oh, George!

[GEORGE and ARABELLA embrace.]

DR. WILMOT.

That's right! Buss her! Gad, when I was a young fellow——

[MRS. PRIMROSE has poured out wine.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

A glass of my gooseberry wine, Dr. Wilmot, to toast the young people!

DR. WILMOT.

Your servant, Mrs. Primrose. But, first, Charles Primrose, most honourable of men!

[Raising glass.]

VICAR.

Wilmot! The perfect friend!

DR. WILMOT.

Amen!

[They drink.]

THE OTHERS.

Hear, hear!

VICAR.

Friendship that withstands adversity!

[*Toasting.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Friendship that nothing can change! Nothing!

VICAR.

Amen!

[*They drink.*]

THE OTHERS.

How touching!

[*MRS. PRIMROSE replenishes glasses.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Here's to matrimony!

THE OTHERS.

Hear, hear!

[*All drink the toast.*]

VICAR.

[*Before drinking it.*] Aye. Monogamy! One wife!

DR. WILMOT.

At a time!

VICAR.

Ever!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Pausing in the act of drinking.*] What, sir! Have I been deceived in you!

VICAR.

Deceived, sir? Explain yourself!

DR. WILMOT.

You mean to say that you retain your absurd views after the chastisement an all-wise Providence has inflicted on you, reducing you from affluence to beggary!

VICAR.

Not beggary, sir. Sixteen pounds a year!

MOSES.

To be increased by husbandry!

VICAR.

And in any case, sir, I am not a weathercock to be turned hither and thither by the winds of fortune! Once a monogamist, always a monogamist, on principle, sir!

DR. WILMOT.

Principle! On sixteen pounds a year!

MOSES.

Increased by——

DR. WILMOT.

Flying in the face of Providence! Charles Primrose, I renounce you! I shake the dust of your dwelling from my feet!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Nettled.*] Dust, Dr. Wilmot! On my floors!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Calling from the window.*] What, ho, without! My horses!

ARABELLA.

[*Who has been sitting with GEORGE'S arm about her.*]  
Oh, Papa! How cruel!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Seizing ARABELLA'S arm.*] How dare you, Miss! Let go, sir, or by the living Jingo, I'll——

ARABELLA.

[*Weeping.*] Oh, sir! Would you break my heart?

GEORGE.

My adored Arabella, these tears!—Oh, sir, I implore you!—Mother, plead for me!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Oh, Dr. Wilmot, sir, do not sacrifice these two young lives! Be a monogamist, I beg you—just this once!

THE OTHERS.

[*Pleading.*] Aye, sir! Pray do!

DR. WILMOT.

Never! What, ho, there, I say! Deuce take those fellows!

[*Calling at door, rear.*]



MRS. PRIMROSE.

Charles, love, let not your pride force our eldest son to go through life with blighted prospects, broken heart! Just for this occasion I implore you, cease being a monogamist!

THE OTHERS.

Aye, sir! Pray, pray——

VICAR.

Alas! My principles—my conscience——

DR. WILMOT.

Come, Miss!—Principles, conscience, quotha, on sixteen pounds a year!

VICAR.

Dr. Wilmot; let us not part in anger!

DR. WILMOT.

Anger, sir! When I reflect—[*Unable to finish. Then in a burst.*] I'm going straight home to marry my fourth wife!

[*Angry exit, dragging ARABELLA.*]

[*General exclamation. The VICAR is shocked.*]

GEORGE.

[*Slaps brow.*] Alas! Life is over for me now!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor lad! However——

VICAR

My dear son! If only——

OLIVIA.

[*At looking-glass.*] Myself I never thought her the great beauty she's reputed!

SOPHIA.

And, truly, brother, she lacks strength of character, or else——

MOSES.

Take comfort, George! As one of the ancients says concerning love——

GEORGE.

The ancients! Love! As for character, beauty, to me she is—the one—the most—the only—[*Waves away the others who seek to console him.*] Suffer me to weep alone!

[*Exit R. 2. Murmur of sympathy from all.*]

VICAR.

[*Sadly.*] Poor lad! Yet conscience—principle—monogamy——

[*Sits, reads; the others busy themselves about household tasks. Olivia sits in window-seat, softly playing and singing, with guitar. A hunter's horn is heard.*]

DICK AND BILL.

Oh, see the hunters ride by!

[*Run off, rear, the others look off, with exception of*  
VICAR.]

MOSES.

That one, in bravest apparel—he must be some great gentleman!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

As I live, he's looking this way. [OLIVIA *thrums on guitar, as if to say, "Is that so strange?"*] And, see! He looks again! [OLIVIA *thrums again.*] I vow, he's taking off his hat, and bowing! [OLIVIA *thrums again.*]

VICAR.

Come from the window, daughter. I would not have a stranger think thee forward!

OLIVIA.

Never fear, sir! He but doffed his hat in passing, and rode on!

[*Leaving window and strolling to looking-glass.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Meditatively.*] None the less he looked, and looked again! Who knows but——

[*DICK and BILL run on, breathless.*]

DICK AND BILL.

Oh, papa! Mamma! Sisters! That gentleman in the laced coat, he is the Squire.

[*All show interest.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Squire Thornhill?

VICAR.

Our landlord!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

The greatest fortune in the county!



What! And picking her colours wrong! I dare swear she's dreaming of that eccentric Mr. What's-His-Name!

SOPHIA.

Mr. Burchell! [*With slight asperity.*]

OLIVIA.

Aye, Mr. Burchell, who saved her from a ducking when her horse stumbled with her yesterday!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*In alarm.*] What, Miss? Setting your thoughts upon that—that——

OLIVIA.

[*Mimicking SOPHIA, in tender accents.*] Mr. Burchell!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

That pauper! That——

VICAR.

My dear! A most cultivated gentleman! A traveller! A philosopher!

SOPHIA.

[*Gratefully to VICAR.*] Truly, sir, as he walked beside me I found his conversation as improving as your own!

VICAR.

Oh, hardly that, my child!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*In maternal alarm, seizing SOPHIA's arm.*] Sophia, did he pay you marked attention?

SOPHIA.

Indeed, no, Mamma. He only saved my life!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Surely, you never encouraged him?

SOPHIA.

Indeed, no, Mamma! I only thanked him!

OLIVIA.

[*Teasing.*] As often as had she as many lives as a cat and he had saved them all!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

This is serious. Charles, you must get rid of him, should he call!

VICAR.

Fie, Deborah! Get rid of a guest, a gentleman and a——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

A nobody! A pauper! And——

SOPHIA.

[*With warmth.*] My preserver!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

I know a way. Just as at Wakefield we got rid of our poor relations: by lending them something, a saddle, a pound, an umbrella.

VICAR.

By that token, then, are we already rid of Mr. Burchell,  
since I lent him money!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

You lent him money!—Charles, what imprudence!

VICAR.

My love, could I do otherwise? I found he had parted with his last guinea to the beadle to save an old, broken soldier from being whipped through the town for dog-stealing!

SOPHIA.

[*With tender emotion.*] How noble of him!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Hm, well, 'twas a good investment! I warrant that's the last we shall see of Mr. Nobody!

SOPHIA.

[*Rising, with warmth.*] I dare stake my life upon his honesty!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Highty-tighty, Miss!

DICK AND BILL.

[*At window.*] Here's someone at the gate!—A gentleman!

[*General expectation.*]

OLIVIA.

[*With delighted expectancy.*] Oh, the Squire?

DICK.

Nay. 'Tis the strange kind gentleman that saved sister Sophy's life——

BILL.

And gave us gingerbread!

SOPHIA.

I knew it! I knew he'd come!

MOSES.

As Sophocles remarks, a wise man gathers what to expect of the future from the past! Our philosopher comes to borrow more money!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My bright boy! You always hit the nail on the head!

SOPHIA.

Mother! Moses!

*[Indignantly protesting.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Charles; children; come within! Let him think us from home!

VICAR.

Woman! I will not suffer a guest to be so entreated!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Now, my love; in matters of conscience I bow submissively to your slightest word, but in household matters,



and—[*Knock at door, rear.*] Hush!—Come quickly! [*Gets the family off, at the right, VICAR and SOPHIA protesting.*]

[*Knock repeated.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Outside.*] What, ho, within! [*Opens door. Enters.*] What, everyone away! Yet methought I spied the little lads, and the sweet person of my Sophia at the window! Ah, well!—[*Sighs.*] I must not intrude. I will leave the sum the good old man loaned me so confidingly.—Now, how much was it! Gladly as I'd enrich him I must not wound his pride!—Now, where—[*Gets money from purse, considers where to lay it.*] Ha! The Bible!—Under this—[*Lays money under Bible. About to go reluctantly, looks about the room.*] O abode of sweet simplicity, frugality, virtue, and content! I wonder if here a man may find a bride who values him for merit alone, and not for rank, fortune, vast estates! Who's this? [EPHRAIM JENKINSON, *disguised as a venerable old man, passes window, without seeing Mr. Burchell.*] It looks like—It is! My old acquaintance, Ephraim Jenkinson! I wonder what roguery he's up to now! I'll prove him!

[*Hides behind piece of furniture. JENKINSON cautiously opens door, rear, looks in, and believing the room empty, enters stealthily.*]

JENKINSON.

[*Taking his bearings.*] This parson, I hear, is an easy mark! 'Tis a shame to trick a holy man, but when one's put to it—!—What's this? [*Takes tract from table, reads title.*] “Tract in defence of Monogamy, by the Reverend

Charles Primrose, Vicar of Wakefield.”—Good! A knowledge of his foibles will serve my turn. [*Pocketing tract, goes up, rear.*] I’ll study this, then contrive to fall in with him casually, and—[MR. BURCHELL *quietly advances, blocks his way.* JENKINSON *starts.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

Well, Jenkinson!

JENKINSON.

[*Recovering self-possession.*] You mistake, good sir. My name is——

MR. BURCHELL.

Ephraim Jenkinson, whom many a time I have committed to the stocks for poaching, and other——

JENKINSON.

[*In panic, falling on knees.*] Body and soul of me! It’s Sir William Thornhill! Indeed, sir, I thought your Honour was still in foreign parts, or I never should have dared—!

MR. BURCHELL.

What are you about in this disguise?

[*With his stick pulling off JENKINSON’S wig, and disarranging his false whiskers.*]

JENKINSON.

[*Looking foolish, pockets his wig and whiskers.*] Now, Sir William, on my conscience, I——

MR. BURCHELL.

Come, no lies! Are you aiding my scapegrace nephew in some new deviltry?

JENKINSON.

No, indeed, your Worship! I haven't seen the young Squire this long time! I just put on these trappings to have a bit of fun with a friend at the fair!

MR. BURCHELL.

What brings you to this house?

JENKINSON.

On my life, Sir William, I only stopped in to beg a drink of water!—[*Rises.*] And, if your Worship won't hang me for the question, what is your Honour about in this disguise?

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Laughs in spite of himself.*] Ha, ha! Well turned, e'en if thou art a knave! It is my whim to travel, to know my fellowmen—above all, mine own tenants, in the garb of indigence!

JENKINSON.

I stake my life that young Mr. Thornhill has no suspicion of your Honour's presence in the neighbourhood!

MR. BURCHELL.

Neither my nephew, nor any one else dependent on me, need fear anything from my observation, so that his conscience be clear! Mark that, Jenkinson!—But, if I hear of any roguery I clap you into the lock-up, sure as my name is——

[*Shaking stick.*]

JENKINSON.

On my life, Sir William, I'll die sooner than put it into your Honour's power to hang me! [*He goes out hurriedly.*]

[MR. BURCHELL *takes up hat from table where he laid it on entering, preparing to depart. Enter R. 2 DICK and BILL, with air of great mystery, closing door behind them softly, tiptoeing toward MR. BURCHELL, fingers on lips. MR. BURCHELL sees them.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

How now, my little men—Dick, Bill!

DICK AND BILL.

[*One on each side of MR. BURCHELL.*] Hush!

DICK.

They're all in there, keeping mum! [*Pointing R. 2.*]  
[MR. BURCHELL *looks puzzled.*]

BILL.

They want you to think us away from home!

MR. BURCHELL.

Eh? How's that! Nay, nay! You must not tell!

DICK.

Mother says you're a——

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Hand over DICK's mouth.*] Tush! Never repeat things that people say of people!

BILL.

Father and sister Sophia wanted to see you! They say you're ——

MR. BURCHELL.

Eh? She cares! She says—What says she of me? Nay, nay! I must not ask! [*Hand over BILL's mouth.*] Feel in my pockets for the fairings I have brought you!

[*DICK and BILL find each a cake of gingerbread and a whistle in MR. BURCHELL'S pockets. They exclaim with pleasure.*]

DICK AND BILL

Oh, a cake of gingerbread, and a whistle!

MR. BURCHELL.

Yes, you must eat the whistle and blow the gingerbread!

[*DICK and BILL look at him enquiringly, then laugh.*]

BILL.

Is it because you say such funny things that mother calls you a pauper?

DICK.

[*Hastily correcting.*] Nay, Bill. 'Tis for that father calls him a philosopher.

MR. BURCHELL.

Now return to your parents. Take your good mother this weasel skin purse for luck, with my service. And to your sisters each a set of ribands, and a box for wafers.—This for Miss Olivia, and [*giving DICK and BILL these articles*] this for Miss Sophia!

DICK.

Oh! Sister Sophy's box is the larger!

BILL.

And her ribands are the prettier!

*[They go off at the right.]*

MR. BURCHELL.

*[Alone, laughs.]* Ha, ha! So even here may be found ambition, pride of heart!

*[Voices. Enter R. 2. the family. MR. BURCHELL bows, greets them cordially. SOPHIA and the VICAR alone show cordiality in returning the greeting.]*

VICAR.

*[Shaking hands with MR. BURCHELL.]* Welcome, Mr. Burchell.

MR. BURCHELL.

Your servant, Dr. Primrose, Mrs. Primrose. I called to—to—— *[Slightly embarrassed, remembering that the money is hidden under Bible. Addresses SOPHIA.]* I trust, madam, you suffered no inconvenience from your fall, yesterday?

SOPHIA.

None, sir, thanks to your heroic act in saving my life.

MRS. PRIMROSE.

The pond was scarce ankle deep!

MR. BURCHELL.

I trust, madam, you caught no cold from the water?

SOPHIA.

None, indeed, sir, thanks to——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Thanks to a hardy constitution. You will excuse us, sir. My eldest son is about to set out for London, and we would see him on his road!

MR. BURCHELL.

Aha! So, young sir, you go to town?

GEORGE.

There to make my fortune, sir!

VICAR.

[To MR. BURCHELL.] You know the world, sir. Perhaps you can give the lad some counsel about making his fortune?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Have the gentleman's counsels made his own fortunes?

MR. BURCHELL.

Well, no, madam! I can't say they have ever put one penny in my purse! Rather the contrary!

SOPHIA.

Poor, poor gentleman!

MR. BURCHELL.

However, if any good word of mine can aid your son——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Interrupting, with hauteur.*] I thank you, sir, but our son lacks not friends! A kinsman of ours promises him

an introduction to Sir William Thornhill, when that nobleman shall have returned from foreign parts!

GEORGE.

[*Taking hat, staff, wallet, etc.*] Meanwhile unencumbered by possessions, and fortified by hope, I feel that many doors are open to me—in the study and practice of law, medicine—as professor of languages, living or dead—as musician, actor, poet.—And now, father, your blessing; mother, your embrace—and on to London, in the name of the beautiful Miss Wilmot!

[*Grand exit, rear, waving hat, followed by the family shouting "Good-bye! Good luck!" etc.*]

SOPHIA.

[*Hurriedly steals back to MR. BURCHELL.*] Sir, do not heed my mother's sharp tongue. Her heart is ever kind!

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Takes her hand, tenderly.*] Sophia—think you, you could care for a—for a philosopher who carries all his worldly goods in his philosophy? But, no! On so short an acquaintance I should not venture—and yet——

SOPHIA.

I might—I might endure the philosopher—if—if——

MR. BURCHILL.

If what, my angel?

SOPHIA.

If I esteemed the man!



MR. BURCHELL.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Adorable candour! Sophia—  
[*SOPHIA snatches hand away, and runs off, rear.*] I have  
twenty minds to proclaim my true name and rank upon  
the spot. And yet—to be preferred for merit alone is so  
sweet! [SQUIRE THORNHILL *appears at window, looks in,*  
but does not see MR. BURCHELL. *Sits on window-sill, picks*  
*up OLIVIA's guitar, thrums, humming song.*] What!—  
My scapegrace nephew Ned!—I'll off, before he recognises  
me!

[*Hurried exit, rear. SQUIRE sings. Family return,*  
*rear, talking; VICAR and MRS. PRIMROSE wiping*  
*their eyes, with tearful tenderness. OLIVIA and*  
*SOPHIA are together. SQUIRE THORNHILL thrums*  
*and hums louder.*]

OLIVIA.

Hark! What, does he still linger, after the rebuff  
mother gave him!—Your admirer may be a man of parts,  
my dear, but I can't compliment you on his musical at-  
tainments. He has less voice than a crow!

SQUIRE.

[*Leaps in at window; advances to salute MRS. PRIM-*  
*ROSE.*] Your servant, Mrs. Primrose!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

And who may you be, my pert young sprig?

SQUIRE.

Permit me to salute you!

[*About to kiss her. She shrieks, boxes his ears.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Varlet! Charles, chastise him as he deserves!

[*All the others recognise the SQUIRE, and speak, OLIVIA foremost.*]

OLIVIA.

[*And others.*] Mamma! Mamma! It is our landlord!— . . .  
The Squire—Mr. Thornhill!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Curtseying, mortified and apologetic.*] Oh, sir! Had  
I but guessed——

SQUIRE.

[*Good-humouredly, rubbing his cheek.*] Perhaps the  
young ladies will be kinder!

[*Makes to salute OLIVIA.*]

VICAR.

[*Gently, interposing.*] Sir, I beg!

SQUIRE.

Come, come! 'Tis a town fashion!

[*VICAR still refuses to allow it, by gesture.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Why not, Charles? 'Tis a town fashion!

VICAR.

Sir, my daughters are but country girls!

SQUIRE.

Clearly! For, strike me blind if the town ever grew such roses!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Delighted.*] Oh, sir! Handsome is as handsome does.—And, yet, though I do say it.—Hold up your head, my pretty Olivia!

VICAR.

Also, they are good girls, sir!

SQUIRE.

I'll stake my life on that—if virtue be shewn by complexion, eyes!—But, come, Mistress Amaryllis, Phyllis, Chloe—whatever is thy name?

VICAR.

I fain would have christened her Grisel, sir—after the ballad of Patient Griselda, but her mother insisted on——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Olivia!

SQUIRE.

Come, Mistress Olivia—I'll swear to 't you have a pretty finger for the guitar and can warble like a nightingale!

[*Holds out guitar to OLIVIA.*]

OLIVIA.

[*Blushing, bashful, and delighted.*] Indeed, sir, I should not venture before a cognoscento like yourself. But won't you favour us? I heard you accompanying yourself to

perfection as we entered—and indeed my music-master's tones were not half so loud or melodious!

[SOPHIA coughs.]

SQUIRE.

Nay, I insist! Some favourite song by Mr. Dryden!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Do, my love, oblige the Squire with that sweet little melancholy air your dear papa is so fond of—"When lovely woman stoops to folly"—

OLIVIA.

[Takes guitar, sings.]

"When lovely woman stoops to folly,  
And finds too late that men betray,  
What charm can soothe her melancholy;  
What art can wash her guilt away?

"The only art her guilt to cover,  
To hide her shame from every eye,  
To give repentance to her lover,  
And wring his bosom—is to die!"

SQUIRE.

[Applauds ostentatiously.] Curse me if I ever was more agreeably entertained! But I must be off! Some day, sweet Olivia, we'll mingle our lips—I mean, our tones, in a duetto!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

You'll taste my gooseberry wine, Squire?—Hand it to the Squire, Livy, love!—'Twas she who made it, sir!

[Pouring wine.]

VICAR.

Made from a recipe of Mrs. Primrose's own, sir! She is a notable housewife!

SQUIRE.

Your servant, Dr.—Mrs. Primrose, and——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

'Twas Olivia who gathered the gooseberries, Squire.

SQUIRE.

[*Seizes OLIVIA's hand.*] Here's to the fingers that gathered the gooseberries!

[*MOSES, DICK and BILL thrust their hands forward.*]

MOSES.

Then must you drink to mine——

DICK.

And mine——

BILL.

And mine!

[*SQUIRE laughs, rises, setting down his glass.*]

SQUIRE.

I shall see thee again soon! [*To OLIVIA.*]

VICAR.

I shall see you, sir, on Sunday, I trust, at church!

SQUIRE.

True! I was forgetting church—I mean, I had forgotten Sunday!—After service I will show the young ladies the beauties of the Hall!

VICAR.

Sir, we will defer that pleasure till the Hall shall have a mistress!

SQUIRE.

A plague on being a bachelor! But I'll not be denied! I have two ladies visiting me—cousins. Their names: let's see—Lady Blarney, and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs! [*Sensation produced by these names.*] So, now, for the present farewell!

[*Takes OLIVIA's hand.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

She's scarce nineteen, sir, and I declare she's almost as tall as yourself! Back to back, and I'll measure!

SQUIRE.

I never turn my back on so fair a lady!

[*About to kiss OLIVIA, she breaks from him.*]

OLIVIA.

Oh, lud! Mr. Thornhill!

[*SQUIRE laughs and makes dashing exit, rear.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

What a genteel person! Such easy manners! And such a flow of conversation!

SOPHIA.

Aye, the more trifling the subject the more he has to say on it!

DICK.

I like Mr. Burchell better!

BILL.

So do I!

SOPHIA.

Darlings!

*[An arm about each.]*

OLIVIA.

For my part I think him an impudent familiar fellow—— *[SQUIRE puts head in at window, unseen by family.]* and quite shocking on his guitar!

*[SQUIRE laughs, disappears.]*

VICAR.

I must prepare a sermon—on the pomps and vanities——

*[Sits down, writes.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

*[Meditatively.]* My Lady Blarney, and Miss——

OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK AND BILL.

Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs!

MOSES.

Hardly a classical name, but high-sounding!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Ladies of quality! I'll make you girls a complexion wash!

*[Getting materials and saucepan from cupboard.]*

VICAR.

[*Overhearing, sternly.*] Woman! I forbid it!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Guiltily, dropping saucepan on table.*] La, Charles, my love!

VICAR.

How often have I told you such things destroy more than they mend.

[*Resumes work.* MRS. PRIMROSE *sadly puts away materials, etc.*]

OLIVIA.

[*At glass, discontentedly.*] What's the good of a complexion when one has to trudge two miles through the sun?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor beauty! But you can ride the colt!

OLIVIA.

And meet my Lady Blarney on a colt minus a tail? Not I!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

There's Blackberry!

SOPHIA.

Poor wheezy old Blackberry! And should he stumble with me again Mr. Burchell might not be at hand to save me!

[*Stops short in confusion as OLIVIA and MOSES laugh, teasingly.*]

MOSES.

I have an idea!



MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Proudly.*] My bright boy! Another?

[MRS. PRIMROSE, OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK and BILL gather round MOSES, they confer in a whisper, then clap hands.]

OLIVIA AND SOPHIA.

[*Delighted.*] Oh, brother!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My own boy!—You must make a fine appearance!

OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK AND BILL.

Aye, that you must!

[MOSES sits, DICK and BILL polish his shoe buckles.

OLIVIA cocks up his hat with pins. SOPHIA reties the broad black riband bow of his queue, MRS. PRIMROSE gets his outer coat.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Here; put on this thunder-and-lightning coat!

MOSES.

Oh, mother—I have outgrown it!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

But 'tis of such good quality! Leave it unbuttoned to display thy waistcoat of gosling green!

VICAR.

Speaking of pomps and vanities—— [*The others start*

*guiltily, suspend operations.]* Remember that no one is more sensible of the difference between his station and ours than our young landlord!

THE OTHERS.

Aye, sir!

[VICAR resumes writing, they resume operations, MOSES rises, beautified, and goes, rear.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Now mind you make a good bargain!

OLIVIA.

Aye, sell the colt, and bring back a fine new saddle horse!

SOPHIA.

And a saddle!—

MRS. PRIMROSE, OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK AND BILL.  
Mind you make a good bargain!

MOSES.

To encourage me to bargain, is, as an ancient puts it, to instruct an eagle how to fly!

[*He goes out, rear; the others following him, calling*  
*“Good luck! Good luck!”*]

VICAR.

[*Absently, looking up from work.*] “Vanity of vanities,” saith the preacher—Why—what is this commotion?

[*Looks from window.*] And whither does Moses lead the colt?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Coming down with the others.*] Now, my dear, we are to have company at church, on Sunday, and——

VICAR.

Fear not, my love! Whether we do or not I promise you a sermon! But——

OLIVIA.

And, papa—surely you would have us go as decently as possible?

VICAR.

[*Nods assent.*] In a spirit meek and humble. But tell me whither does Moses——

SOPHIA.

You know, sir, he lacks a tail!

VICAR.

Will no one tell me——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Now, Charles; do you like to see our daughters trudging up to our pew as blowsed and red with walking as had they been winners in a smock race?

VICAR.

Woman! Daughters! Unless some one tells me——

DICK.

Moses is going to sell the colt at the fair!

VICAR.

Sell the colt!

BILL.

And buy my sisters a fine new saddle horse in its stead!

VICAR.

What! [MRS. PRIMROSE, OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK AND BILL *all talk at the same time.* VICAR *raises his hands for silence.*] Silence!—Run after him! Stop him!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Oh, by this time he will have made his bargain!

VICAR.

And pray how will poor, wall-eyed old Blackberry plough without his accustomed yoke-fellow?

[*General exclamation of dismay.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

We never thought of that!—I have it! Charles, you must go sell Blackberry, and buy another new horse!

THE OTHERS.

Aye, papa! That's it!

[*General bustle, getting VICAR's hat, stick, etc.*]

VICAR.

[*Protesting.*] But——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Now don't let them cheat you, love!

THE OTHERS.

No, papa! Don't let them cheat you!

VICAR.

Woman! Girls! Have you no opinion of my prudence,  
my——

THE OTHERS.

[*Working the VICAR, rear, out of the room.*] Good-bye!  
Good luck! Don't let them cheat you!

[*Exit the VICAR, followed by DICK and BILL. MRS.  
PRIMROSE and the girls are jubilant.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

I must get out my crimson paduasoy!

[*She goes out R. 2, into the bedroom.*]

SOPHIA.

[*Looking tenderly at the ribands given her by MR.  
BURCHELL.*] I shall thread my cap with these—his gift!

[*She goes out into the bedroom.*]

OLIVIA.

[*Considering.*] My gauze—or the flowered silk? The  
silk matches my complexion, and the gauze my eyes—and  
he praised my eyes, my complexion——

[*The SQUIRE appears at window. OLIVIA not seeing  
him, hums “When lovely woman——”*]

SQUIRE.

[*Sings.*] “Stoops to folly!”

OLIVIA.

[*Turns, sees him.*] La, Mr. Thornhill! You?

SQUIRE.

[*Enters, comes to her.*] Knew you not I should return?

OLIVIA.

But—so soon!

SQUIRE.

Guessed you not it would be soon?

OLIVIA.

Pray, sir, be seated while I call my mamma, my sister.

SQUIRE.

Summon them by all means. Rouse the neighbourhood—if—— [OLIVIA *hesitates. He laughs, goes to her.*] Ah! The woman that deliberates is lost!

OLIVIA.

[*Offering guitar.*] Perhaps, sir, you will favour me with a selection.

SQUIRE.

What! When I'm quite shocking on the guitar!

OLIVIA.

[*Embarrassed.*] Sir——

SQUIRE.

An impudent, familiar fellow——

OLIVIA.

Sir—Mr. Thornhill——

SQUIRE.

Whom for your own part, you don't like at all!

OLIVIA.

Indeed, sir!—I protest it serves you right for eaves-dropping!

SQUIRE.

Oh, I enjoyed it!—But, tell me! How shall I teach you to like me?

OLIVIA.

Sir, is it worth your while? I am but a simple country girl, and you are used to ladies of the town!

SQUIRE.

Not one of whom can boast half your attractions, my dear! Curse me if ever I held a shapelier hand—no more fitted for cow-milking and butter-churning than——  
[OLIVIA *snatches hand away, moves from him. He follows her.*] Nature framed that lovely shape to be shewn off at assemblies, those little feet to dance at Vauxhall, Ranelagh; those eyes to be the toast of every coffee house in town; those lips for——

DICK AND BILL.

[*Outside calling.*] Mamma! Sisters! Here comes Moses from the fair!

[*The SQUIRE seizes OLIVIA in his arms and kisses her, then leaps out of window as DICK and BILL enter, at the rear, and MRS. PRIMROSE and SOPHIA enter, talking, from the bedroom.*]

OLIVIA.

[*Hides face in hands, unnoted by all, then to herself.*] He despises me for a rustic.—But I'll show him I can hold my own!

[*Enter MOSES, rear, with heavy box strapped on back.*]

ALL.

[*Greet him, eagerly.*] Welcome, Moses! Welcome!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Well, my boy, and what have you brought us from the fair?

MOSES.

[*Unstrapping box and setting it on table.*] I have brought you myself!

ALL.

Yes; but——

OLIVIA.

Did you sell the colt?

MOSES.

I sold the colt!

SOPHIA.

Did you make a good bargain?



MRS. PRIMROSE.

My dear; Moses always makes a good bargain! He stands and haggles till his adversary is fairly worn out!

MOSES.

I have sold the colt for three pounds, five shillings, and twopence.

*[All exclaim, approving.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

*[Proudly.]* Well done, my boy! I knew you would touch them off!—Come, let us have the money!

MOSES.

The money! I have laid it all out on a bargain!

*[All exclaim, surprised and doubtful.]*

OLIVIA.

*[Impatiently.]* But—my saddle horse?

MOSES.

*[Opening the box, with deliberation and pride.]* It was the luckiest chance. I fell in with a reverend looking man. He wanted to borrow twenty pounds on these— *[Tapping box.]* But he was willing to sell them outright for a fraction of their value—so I took one gross, and neighbour Flamborough the other!

ALL.

*[Impatient.]* A gross of what?

MOSES.

With silver rims and shagreen cases—worth double the money!

ALL.

But what!

MOSES.

[*Proudly, displaying a pair.*] Green spectacles!

ALL.

[*Horried.*] WHAT!—You have parted with the colt for——

[*Each seizes a pair and examines it.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

A fig for your silver rims! Varnished copper! As for your shagreen cases—A murrain on such trumpery! You've parted with the colt for——

MOSES.

But, mother! Why won't you listen to reason!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Reason? You blockhead! You have been imposed upon! Marry, hang the idiot, say I!

VICAR.

[*Outside, cheerfully calls.*] What, ho!

DICK AND BILL.

Here comes papa!

[*All look conscious and hold spectacles behind them.*  
*Enter the VICAR, in high spirits.*]

VICAR.

Well, my dears!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Did you sell Blackberry, my love?

VICAR.

Aye, that I did! To great advantage! I make no doubt I have done at least as good a day's work as Moses. [*All cough, consciously.*] It was the luckiest chance. I fell in with a gentleman who recognised me, called me by name—knew me as the author of a work which he happened to be carrying with him—a treatise on Monogamy. He bought Blackberry for a round figure.

[*All exclaim, delighted.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Where is the money, love?

VICAR.

[*Getting paper from pocketbook.*] As I was unable to change a thirty pound note for him he gave me a draft on neighbour Flamborough——

[*Great commotion, outside. Enter MR. FLAMBOROUGH, followed by all the FLAMBOROUGHs, excited, each holding some article.*]

FLAMBOROUGH.

Aye, I have been most vilely rogued!

THE OTHER FLAMBOROUGHs.

Oh, most vilely rogued!

VICAR.

Ah, neighbour! I have a draft on you!

FLAMBOROUGH.

On me, Doctor?

VICAR.

Given me at the fair by a gentleman who spoke of you as his most valued friend—a venerable man, dressed as a clergyman, named——

[*The PRIMROSES and the FLAMBOROUGHs all exclaim.*

MR. BURCHELL, *outside*, calls, “*What ho, within!*”

*Enters hurriedly.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

Oh, my dear friends, I come to warn you against being rogued at the fair by the greatest knave unhung—one Ephraim Jenkinson—disguised as a clergyman.

[*General exclamation. The VICAR is amazed. Each PRIMROSE and each FLAMBOROUGH puts on the pair of spectacles he or she holds. The VICAR by signs shows that he is enlightened. MR. BURCHELL laughs in spite of himself. The others are forced to join in his laughter despite their discomfiture.*]

CURTAIN—END OF ACT I.

## **ACT II**



## ACT II

*The same scene as Act I. A few weeks later. Evening; candlelight.*

*The sound of music—pipe, tabour and fiddle—is heard outside, and the voices of the young people who are dancing. Moonlight streams through the window.*

DISCOVERED: *The VICAR, MR. FLAMBOROUGH and MRS. PRIMROSE, the two men smoking pipes, and watching the dancers from the window.*

FLAMBOROUGH.

Miss Livy's feet seem as pat to the music as its echo!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Little chit! For all she does it so cleverly she has stolen her steps from me!

[VICAR laughs, comes to MRS. PRIMROSE, and pats her shoulder.]

FLAMBOROUGH.

They make a well-matched couple. Miss Livy and——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[With sudden interest, looks out of window.] Who?—  
Oh, Farmer Williams!

[Disappointed.]

FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Coming from window.*] By the way, young Williams has asked me to put in a good word for him with you. It was all over with the lad the first time he set eyes on Miss Livy! And——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Disgusted.*] Farmer Williams, indeed!

FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Continuing.*] It's a rare chance, neighbours! I'd wish no better for one of my own girls.

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*With pride.*] Thanks, sir! A good match mayhap for Miss Flamborough, but when it comes to Miss Primrose——!

VICAR.

Tut, tut, wife! I have a high opinion of Mr. Williams. He seems prudent, and sincere!

FLAMBOROUGH.

As fine a fellow as ever trod shoe-leather, sir.

VICAR.

And, I take it, in easy circumstances.

FLAMBOROUGH.

Aye. A warm man, able to give your girl good bread. It's a rare chance. His mother has lately died, and his farm needs a manager.



MRS. PRIMROSE.

Hoity-toity! A manager!

VICAR.

Deborah! This pride of heart!

FLAMBOROUGH.

Pride comes before a fall! Let me tell you——

[*Excited voices are heard outside. OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK and BILL enter, rear, followed by MR. BURCHELL, the MISSES FLAMBOROUGH, MOSES and FARMER WILLIAMS.*]

OLIVIA, SOPHIA, DICK AND BILL.

[*Entering.*] Oh, Papa, Mamma! There's a fortune-telling gipsy outside!

OLIVIA.

She has promised the Misses Flamborough each a rich and handsome husband!

[*The MISSES FLAMBOROUGH titter, taxed by MOSES, FARMER WILLIAMS, and others. FLAMBOROUGH laughs at them.*]

SOPHIA.

[*To VICAR.*] Please give us each a shilling to cross her palm with silver!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Why, my dears, 'twas but yesterday I gave you each a guinea!

OLIVIA AND SOPHIA.

Aye, mother, but——

[*Stop short.*]

DICK.

You bade them not to change it, mother! You told them——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Hush, Dick!

*[Hand over DICK's mouth.]*

BILL.

Aye. You told them just to carry it for the honour of the family!

*[MRS. PRIMROSE tries to hush BILL. The others laugh.]*

VICAR.

*[Gives each daughter a shilling.]* There! May it bring you your heart's desire!

OLIVIA AND SOPHIA.

Oh, thank you, sir!—A rich and handsome husband!

*[Run off, gaily, accompanied by the others, with the exception of MR. BURCHELL, who remains.]*

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

*[Seriously.]* Speaking of husbands—Doctor, I say it as one father to another!—Gossip is busy with your girl's good name!—Miss Olivia——

VICAR.

*[Horrified.]* What! Mr. Flamborough! My Olivia!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

*[Nods assent, sadly.]* The young Squire—indeed there's

scarce a farmer's daughter within twenty miles but has found him successful—and faithless! Eh, Mr. Burchell?

MR. BURCHELL.

I grieve to say I believe it to be true!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Marry, what then? A reformed rake ever makes the best husband!

VICAR.

I deny it! Not the best!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

As good as the best, then!

MR. BURCHELL.

If Mr. Thornhill intended marriage! But, as I happen to know, he is paying his addresses to an heiress—a Miss Wilmot!

VICAR.

What! My son George's mistress, the lovely Arabella?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

A trumped-up tale, I'll warrant!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

Meanwhile the parish is buzzing with scandalous reports!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

The parish is envious!

VICAR.

Hush, Deborah! The parish is over-censorious. Our landlord has but called here once or twice, sent us a side or so of venison, and once condescended to partake of our goose and dumplings! [MR. FLAMBOROUGH *coughs*. MR. BURCHELL *is silent*. MRS. PRIMROSE *looks conscious*.] So, gentlemen, though your caution is well-intentioned, I——

[*Excited voices outside. Enter OLIVIA and SOPHIA.*]

OLIVIA AND SOPHIA.

Oh, papa, mamma! It's beyond belief!

OLIVIA.

That gipsy—I believe she deals with someone who's not quite right! Within a twelvemonth, she declares, I'm to be married!

SOPHIA.

And so am I!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Last night I dreamed of a coffin and crossbones, sure sign of a wedding!

OLIVIA.

And I saw a ring in the candle!

SOPHIA.

And I a love-knot in my cup!

VICAR.

Amazing! But to whom are you to be married?

OLIVIA.

That is the wonderful part! To a squire!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Aha! What say you to that, Mr. Flamborough?

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Earnestly.*] God send it may be true, madam!

[*Goes out, rear.*]

SOPHIA.

And I'm to have a baronet!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Aha! What say you to that, Mr. Burchell?

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Delighted.*] God send it may be true, madam!

[*SOPHIA exclaims, disappointed in him; he hurriedly corrects himself.*] I mean—my dearest life—[*SOPHIA goes out, rear, pouting.* MR. BURCHELL follows, protesting.]

[*OLIVIA sits, and happily plays softly on guitar, humming her song.*]

VICAR.

Olivia—come hither, my girl! I have just had an offer for thee!

OLIVIA.

[*Overcome with joy.*] Oh, papa! Has he really spoken? Oh, mother, give me joy! Oh, I'm the happiest—but why is he himself not here?

VICAR.

Shall I call him?

OLIVIA.

Aye, call him. Edward—Ned!

*[Running to the door.]*

VICAR.

*[Holding her back.]* Olivia—Farmer Williams——

OLIVIA.

*[Stops short, amazed, and heart-broken.]* Farmer Williams! Oh, I thought——*[Breaks into sobbing.]*

VICAR.

My child, this is serious! Has Mr. Thornhill discovered a secret attachment for thee?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Secret—when he comes daily——

*[Stops short.]*

VICAR.

*[Amazed.]* What!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

While you and Moses are harvesting, my love, to instruct Olivia in picquet! And to retail the wit of the playhouses ere it passes into the jest-books.

VICAR.

When she had far better be employed in sewing, or baking! Do you ever see the Squire alone, Olivia?

OLIVIA.

Now and then, sir—while out walking—by accident.

VICAR.

Ah, then there is foundation for gossip!—But, Farmer Williams—I myself have seen you lavish tenderness on the young man!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Only when Squire Thornhill was present, my dear—to spur him on!

OLIVIA.

That is all, truly, sir! As for Farmer Williams—the great oaf to take it to himself!

VICAR.

Hm. Yet, somehow, your ruse seems not to have succeeded! [SQUIRE, *humming song, passes window.*] Here comes the Squire now. I shall question him!

MR. PRIMROSE.

Nay, Charles. Leave him to me!

[*Pushes VICAR and OLIVIA behind screen.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Opens door, rear, enters.*] Olivia—Ah, Mrs. Primrose. They told me I should find her here.

MRS. PRIMROSE.

She's off wandering by herself in the moonlight, Squire, no doubt—thinking of somebody!—Pray, sir, let me con-

gratulate you—on your approaching marriage. Miss Wilmot is not only a fortune, but as some think, a beauty!

SQUIRE.

Miss Wilmot! Now strike me ugly if ever I looked twice at such a fright!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

And, yet, sir, 'tis the warm fortunes get the good husbands! And, while we're on that subject, can you recommend me a husband for my Olivia?

SQUIRE.

Madam, I know no one who deserves such a treasure. Olivia is a goddess! She's an angel!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Ah, Squire—you flatter my poor girl. We are even now considering a proposal from Farmer Williams.

SQUIRE.

What! Sacrifice such beauty to—Never! I cannot approve! I have my reasons!

[*Going up.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Following him.*] Your reasons, sir! If I might know your reasons——

SQUIRE.

Madam, they lie buried here! [*Hand on heart. Exit.*]

[*The VICAR and OLIVIA emerge. During this scene the VICAR has wished to interpose, but has been held*



*back by OLIVIA, who by signs shows her satisfaction. MRS. PRIMROSE by nods and winks has signed to the VICAR how cleverly she thinks she is managing the interview. He shakes head, dubiously.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Well!

OLIVIA.

Papa! Can you doubt his sentiments, the exalted nature of his passion?

VICAR.

To me it savoured more of love than of matrimony! Hark you, my child. I put no constraint upon your feelings. But neither will I let you trifle with honest Williams. If——

*[Music; voices outside, calling OLIVIA.]*

OLIVIA.

Papa; I promise you that if within a week the Squire has not declared himself, I will marry Mr. Williams!

VICAR.

That is my dutiful child! *[Kisses OLIVIA. All three go out.]*

*[SQUIRE leaps in at window. LADY BLARNEY and MISS SKEGGS look in at window.]*

LADY BLARNEY.

Hang it, Ned! You don't expect us to follow you at that gait!

*[SQUIRE opens door, rear. MISS SKEGGS enters.]*

MISS SKEGGS.

So this is where your Perdita lives, eh? The abode, no doubt, of virtue!

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Entering, rear.*] Oh, hang your virtue! What have we to do with virtue!

SQUIRE.

A truce to jest! The business in hand is this. On some pretext or another, get the girl to town—or, as the sisters have never been separated, both girls! [LADY BLARNEY and MISS SKEGGS *nod assent.*] But, guard your tongues. If you rip out an oath—ware!

LADY BLARNEY.

Now curse me if I——

[*Claps her hand over her mouth.*]

MISS SKEGGS.

Let us pray!

LADY BLARNEY.

Amen!

SQUIRE.

My gipsy trick has paved the way. [*Voices, laughter heard outside.*] Also I have already mentioned you as my cousins.

LADY BLARNEY AND MISS SKEGGS.

[*In fits of laughter.*] Your cousins!

SQUIRE.

Your names—let's see.—Aye. Lady Blarney, and Miss—Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs!

[*The women laugh louder.*]

LADY BLARNEY.

I speak for my Lady Blarney.

MISS SKEGGS.

And I for Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs.

[*Voices and laughter outside, nearer.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Leading them hurriedly out at R. 1.*] This way—through the scullery. Best make your entrance when they are gathered within!

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Following him, with a swagger.*] My Lady Blarney's carriage stops the way!

MISS SKEGGS.

[*Following her.*] Make way for Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs! [*Exit, laughing and swaggering.*]

[*Enter, rear, the PRIMROSES, the FLAMBOROUGHs, FARMER WILLIAMS, and OTHERS, also MR. BURCHELL. They are playing blindman's buff. MR. BURCHELL, blindfolded, catches SOPHIA as they enter.*]

DICK.

'Tis odd how Miss Flamborough always catches Mr. Williams!

[*General laughter.*]

BILL.

And how Miss Mollie always catches brother Moses!  
[*More laughter.*]

DICK.

And how Farmer Williams always catches sister Livy!

BILL.

And how sister Sophy always catches Mr. Burchell!  
[*General laughter. DICK and BILL are hushed up.*]

ALL.

Now what shall we play?

SOME.

Hot cockles!

OTHERS.

Aye! Hot cockles.

OTHERS.

Questions and commands!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

Play a sitting game so that we elders can join in!

VICAR.

I fear we lack chairs enough!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

A squatting game, then! [*Delighted laughter from others.*] Hunt the slipper!

ALL.

[*Applaud.*] Aye, aye! Hunt the slipper!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

Down on your hams, everybody!

[*They form a ring, sitting on the floor.* MR. FLAMBOROUGH *is just tying a handkerchief over OLIVIA'S eyes when there is a loud double knock at door, rear.*]

ALL.

What's that!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Some trick, I make no doubt! Come in! [*Knock repeated.*] Are you deaf, you idiot? Come in! [*Throws door wide open.*]

[*Footman in livery announces.*]

FOOTMAN.

My Lady Blarney, and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs! [*General consternation. Some rise slightly, then sink back on to floor, the others remain as if glued to floor.*]

[*Enter LADY BLARNEY and MISS SKEGGS.* FOOTMAN *closes door behind them from outside.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My Ladies—death and confusion! Won't you do us the honour to—Moses—chairs!

[*MOSES places chairs in centre of circle.*]

OLIVIA.

[*Going up, and leaning against dresser.*] The Squire's cousins—Oh, what a mortification!

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Clearing throat.*] Ahem!

MISS SKEGGS.

[*Also clearing throat.*] Ahem!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Out of nervousness.*] Ahem!

[*The MISSES FLAMBOROUGH stop him.*]

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Indicating the MISSES FLAMBOROUGH.*] The Misses Primrose?

[*The MISSES FLAMBOROUGH, overcome by confusion, bury their heads on their father's shoulders.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Indicates, introducing.*] My daughters, Olivia and Sophia.

LADY BLARNEY.

Our cousin Thornhill promised us the pleasure of meeting you young ladies at church some weeks ago.

[*The PRIMROSES looked conscious, the FLAMBOROUGHS amused.*]

OLIVIA.

An accident happened to our horses!

LADY BLARNEY AND MISS SKEGGS.

Oh, vastly sorry!

SOPHIA.

But we were not injured!

MISS SKEGGS.

Oh, monstrous glad!

DICK.

Moses sold the colt——

*[Someone hushes him up.]*

BILL.

And papa sold Blackberry——

*[Someone hushes up BILL. A pause.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Fools, are ye glued to the floor? The young people were playing a game, your Ladyship!

LADY BLARNEY.

Skeggs, my dear creature, do you hear? They were playing a game!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

Aye; Hunt the Slipper! Won't you ladies join in? Come, squat down on your hams.

*[He is sharply checked.]*

MISS SKEGGS.

By the living Jingo, games always throw me into a muck of a sweat!

*[All at first start, shocked, then nod as if to say that this doubtless is a fashionable expression. MR. BURCHELL, disgusted, sits facing the fire. There is another pause, during which the two strangers, still seated in the centre of the circle, whisper together. They now speak out loud.]*

I assure your Ladyship, his lordship turned all manner of colours, my Lady fell into a swoon, but Sir Tomkyns, drawing his sword, vowed——

[*Some of her hearers, in awe-struck tones, echo, "HIS LORDSHIP! SIR TOMKYNs! HER LADYSHIP!"*]

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Disgusted.*] Fudge!

[*The PRIMROSES look annoyed with MR. BURCHELL.*]

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Speaking audibly.*] And my Lord Duke cried out three times to his valet de chambre, "Jernigan, Jernigan, Jernigan, bring me my garters!"

[*All except MR. BURCHELL seem impressed.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Loud and disgusted.*] Fudge!

MISS SKEGGS.

Won't your ladyship favour me with a sight of the verses you made on the occasion?

LADY BLARNEY.

My dear creature, do you think I carry such things about with me?

MISS SKEGGS.

Except your ladyship's little pieces, and those of our dear Countess, there's no high life—nothing but the most lowest stuff comes out in the *Lady's Magazine*!



MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

[*The PRIMROSES show annoyance with him.*]

LADY BLARNEY.

Oh, hang it all!—[*Everyone starts, slightly shocked.*]  
as the dear Princess of Wales says!

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

MISS SKEGGS.

True! Nothing goes down at the playhouses excepting Shakespeare! Though of course it is too diverting when that dear, droll Mr. Garrick plays *Shylock*!

LADY BLARNEY.

Aye. For diversion, give me Shakespeare, and the Musical Glasses!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

What are the Musical Glasses?

[*He is promptly suppressed.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Speaking of taste, your Ladyships, our family recently sat in a group to a travelling limner. I myself was depicted as Venus, modestly, yet modishly, attired, with a diamond stomacher——

DICK.

The painter had to imagine the diamonds! [Mrs. PRIMROSE *hushes up* DICK, and continues.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My husband, in gown and bands, was presenting me with his famous treatise on monogamy!

[MR. BURCHELL *laughs*.]

LADY BLARNEY.

Vastly humorous!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Olivia as an Amazon, wore a green Joseph. Sophia was a shepherdess.

BILL.

With as many sheep as the painter would throw in for nothing!

[BILL *is suppressed*.]

LADY BLARNEY AND MISS SKEGGS.

Vastly droll!

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

The Flamboroughs were painted separately. Seven Flamboroughs, each holding an orange!

[MR. BURCHELL *laughs approvingly*. The PRIMROSES *show that they consider this vulgar*.]

DICK.

But our picture has to stay in the scullery where it was painted!

[DICK *is suppressed*.]

BILL.

It is too larged to be moved!

[BILL is suppressed. The FLAMBOROUGHs show amusement.]

LADY BLARNEY.

Monstrous entertaining!—Well, my dear creature, as I was saying: My reader, an orphan, has left me, and I despair of replacing her. Thirty pounds a year is a small stipend for a well-bred girl of character!

[MRS. PRIMROSE shows sudden interest.]

MISS SKEGGS.

That I know, having tried three new companions this last half year! Virtue, dear Lady Blarney, is worth twenty-five guineas a year! Deuce take it, virtue is worth any price—but where is virtue to be found?

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

[The PRIMROSES show annoyance.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[Has counted on her fingers.] Thirty pounds, and twenty-five guineas a year going a-begging! Your Ladyships.—Pardon—but my girls can read, write, cast accounts, broadstitch, cross and change, pink, point, frill; they know something of music, they can do up small clothes, work on catgut; my eldest can cut paper, and my younger has a pretty knack of telling fortunes upon the cards!

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

[LADY BLARNEY and MISS SKEGGS exchange glances.]

MISS SKEGGS.

As far as I can tell, the young ladies seem very fit for such employments!

LADY BLARNEY.

Aye. And to see a little more of the world would greatly improve Miss Olivia!

MISS SKEGGS.

And a winter in town would make quite another thing of my little Sophia!

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

MISS SKEGGS.

But a matter of this kind, madam, requires a thorough examination into character!

[MR. BURCHELL *nods assent.*]

LADY BLARNEY.

[*Rising.*] We will consult my cousin Thornhill. Not that we suspect the young ladies' prudence, virtue, and discretion, but there is a form in these things, madam—there is a form!

MISS SKEGGS.

[*Also having risen.*] Aye, there is a form!

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

[MOSES opens door. FOOTMAN, standing outside, calls

*"My Ladies' carriage!" The ladies pass out with haughty inclinations. The PRIMROSES bow them off.]*

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

*[Rising slowly from floor, his example being followed by all the FLAMBOROUGHs and FARMER WILLIAMS, shakes his head slowly.] Shakespeare—and the Musical Glasses! [The other FLAMBOROUGHs and FARMER WILLIAMS echo him. Taking his hat, he goes to the door, imitating the ladies, and saying.] There is a form in these things, my dear madam! There is a form!*

*[He goes out, followed by his family, FARMER WILLIAMS, and other guests. The VICAR shakes his head, doubtfully. The other PRIMROSES show great pride and importance.]*

MR. BURCHELL.

*[Takes his hat and stick to go. Looks from MRS. PRIMROSE to OLIVIA and SOPHIA and back again. Angrily.]*

Fudge!

*[He goes out hastily.]*

[CURTAIN.]

[END OF ACT II.]



## ACT III





## ACT III

*Same scene as Acts I and II. The day after Act II.  
Late afternoon.*

DISCOVERED: OLIVIA and SOPHIA *folding dresses and packing a trunk*—OLIVIA *gaily, with snatches of song*, SOPHIA *sadly sighing*. THE VICAR and MOSES *playing backgammon*. MRS. PRIMROSE *setting tea*. DICK and BILL *poring over a volume*.

OLIVIA.

My flowered silk, my gauze, my lute-string!—Tra-la-la!

SOPHIA.

My cap—with the ribands he bought me—Heigh-ho!

VICAR.

A capital game—backgammon!

MOSES.

Aye—for the winner!

[*Laughs, taxing VICAR with losing.*]

DICK.

[*Spelling out.*] Musical Glasses.—A musical instrument, consisting of—

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Pausing to look over children.*] What book have you there, children?

DICK AND BILL.

Dr. Johnson's Dictionary!

BILL.

[*Spelling out words.*] Musical Glasses—a musical instrument——

MRS. PRIMROSE

[*Proudly patting children's heads.*] Bless you! I shall live to see thee, Dick, a professor, and thee, Bill, a bishop, yet!

OLIVIA.

London!—La, la!

SOPHIA.

[*Mournfully.*] London! Heigh-ho!

DICK.

[*Scrambling down from the chair.*] Sister Livy—Why do you sing?

OLIVIA.

Because I'm going to London!

SOPHIA.

Heigh-ho!

BILL.

Sister Sophy, why do you sigh?

SOPHIA.

Because I'm going to London!

MOSES.

London brings Livy as much nearer her heart's desire as it takes Sophy away from hers!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor dear!—But as my Lady Blarney remarked, London will qualify Olivia for a higher sphere, while as for Sophia, as Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs truly said——

*[A loud double rap is heard at the rear door. All show surprise.]*

MOSES.

*[Having seen from the window who it is.]* A servant in the Thornhill liveries!

*[Going to the door to open it.]*

OLIVIA.

*[In surprise.]* Why—'tis an hour before the ladies were to send for us!

*[MOSES receives a letter from the servant, and gives it to MRS. PRIMROSE.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

A letter.—Children, run after the man and give him seven shillings!

*[Giving a coin to the children, who run outside with it.]*

VICAR.

Seven shillings? My love! What extravagance!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Now, Charles—thirty pounds and twenty-five guineas a year—fifty-six pounds, five shillings, English money—secured by my good management——

*[Meanwhile opening the letter, and reading it. Suddenly she gives an exclamation. OLIVIA and SOPHIA read over her shoulder. All three exclaim with horrified amazement.]*

THE VICAR AND MOSES.

What is it?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

This is the work of envy! The ladies, having received some ill report of our daughters, have set out to town without them.

*[VICAR and MOSES echo the horrified amazement.]*

OLIVIA.

What can it mean?—Ill report—and no London! Oh, oh, oh!

*[Bursts into tears.]*

SOPHIA.

I can forgo London—but ill-report—Oh, oh, oh!

*[Bursts into tears.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Envy of your good fortune, your superior accomplishments, your beauty—our family distinction!

VICAR.

Now may heaven discover to me who maligns my children!

[*Enter DICK and BILL, excited, with a pocketbook.*]

DICK AND BILL.

Papa! Mamma! See what we have found!—A pocket-book!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Ah! 'Twas this morning a purse bounced out of the fire into my lap! I'll warrant you 'tis money, sent to console us!

VICAR.

[*Taking pocketbook and examining it.*] We must ascertain the owner, in order to return it!—No name!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

'Tis but a penniless pouch!—What are these: notes?

VICAR.

Aye; that the owner will not grudge you. “Reflections of a Philosopher!”

[*SOPHIA shows sudden interest.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Marry, I have no use for such!—[*A sealed letter drops out. It is picked up.*] What's this! “Copy of letter sent to Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs!” The key to the mystery!

[*All exclaim. MRS. PRIMROSE about to open letter.*]

VICAR.

[*Hastily interposing.*] My dear! You would not break a seal!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

What! When you yourself just now called on heaven to discover to you the traducer of your daughters' fame!

[*All except VICAR assent to this view.*]

VICAR.

Natheless—a seal!

MOSES.

As Matthew Prior says, "The end justifies the means." Why not break the seal to learn the owner's name?

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My bright boy! As ever you hit the nail.

SOPHIA.

Papa! Mamma! The philosophy proclaims the owner—Mr. Burchell!

[*General sensation.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

To be sure! The viper that has warmed himself by yonder fire, eaten at this table, borrowed money!

VICAR.

My love! He repaid the money most honourably!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Nods assent.*] To ingratiate himself with you, and

worm himself into the affections of this misguided child! Mark me, this is a plot to prevent Sophia from being removed to a sphere beyond his reach!

SOPHIA.

Mother, you wrong him! Poor, poor gentleman, when he is not here to defend himself! My life on his good faith! Prove him, I say. Read the letter!

*[Snatches letter, breaks seal, glances at contents, shrieks, falls into chair sobbing. All exclaim.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

*[Seizes letter, reads.]* As I thought! "I will not have simplicity imposed upon, nor virtue contaminated."

*[Great sensation.]*

SOPHIA.

Virtue contam— Oh, how could he!

OLIVIA.

Simplicity imposed on! The perjured villain!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor girl! But 'tis best your eyes should be opened!

DICK AND BILL.

*[Seeing MR. BURCHELL pass window, cry out.]* Oh, here comes Mr. Burchell!

*[All exclaim.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

The hardened villain!—Let him not darken our doors!

*[Seizing a broom, or some household implement.]*

VICAR.

Nay, love!—I'll confront him with his treachery!  
[*Taking letter. A knock at door.*]

MOSES.

Catch him by guile!—I'll think up some quotation!  
[*Knock repeated.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Come in!

[*Enter MR. BURCHELL, cheerfully. DICK and BILL run to him.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

Good morrow, friends!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*With sarcasm, and snatching DICK and BILL away from him.*] Good morrow, friend!

[*MR. BURCHELL looks puzzled. A slight pause.*]

VICAR.

[*Trying to be stern at a sign from MRS. PRIMROSE.*]  
Ahem. A fine day, sir!

MR. BURCHELL.

A very fine day, Doctor, though I fancy it bodes rain!  
But—I find you in a merry mood!

[*Looking about him, puzzled.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Breaking into sardonic laughter.*] Ah, ha, ha, ha!



A merry mood, indeed! Pardon, sir, but I do love my joke!

MR. BURCHELL.

Dear madam, I pardon you with all my heart, for I confess I see no joke!

ALL.

He sees no joke! Ah, ha, ha, ha!

[*Echoing MRS. PRIMROSE'S sarcastic laughter.*]

MOSES.

[*With a sudden idea.*] I have it! "An honest man's the noblest work of God!" What say you to that, Mr. Burchell?

[*All show approval.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

Unworthy of Pope's genius, sir! Men, like works of art, should be measured by the greatness of their virtues rather than their freedom from defects!

[*The PRIMROSES exchange glances, as if to say, "That proves him guilty!"*]

VICAR.

Ahem! Look me in the eye, sir!—Do you know this pocketbook?

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Feels in pocket; misses pocketbook.*] Aye, sir! 'Tis mine! I am glad you found it!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Brazen effrontery!



SOPHIA.

Or me of contaminating the virtue of Miss Carolina——  
[*Sobs overcome her. The rest conclude for her.*]

ALL.

Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs!

[*A light suddenly breaks on MR. BIRCHELL, and he laughs uncontrollably, to the horror of all.*]

VICAR.

Wretch! My cloth forbids me to avenge this outrage!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Oh, that my son George were here to chastise you as you deserve!

[*GEORGE outside, gaily shouts.*]

GEORGE.

What, ho! Father—mother—sisters—brothers!  
[*Entering, ragged and travel-stained.*]

THE PRIMROSES.

George!—Welcome! Welcome!  
[*They embrace him.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

You come in the nick of time, my son! Yon perjured ingrate has outraged hospitality—traduced, slandered, maligned your family!

[*GEORGE pauses in the act of shaking hands with MR. BURCHELL.*]

GEORGE.

What is this! Never mind particulars! An insult to the honour of my family! Choose your weapons, sir!

MR. BURCHELL.

Fudge!

[*All exclaim.*]

GEORGE.

How? A poltroon, as well as ingrate?

MR. BURCHELL.

My boy, I could have you clapped into jail for duelling!—While as for those who have broken open my pocket-book—a sealed letter—Don't you know that all I have to do is to swear against you at the next Justice's, and I could hang you all up at the door!

[*Horried exclamation from all.*]

MOSES.

He's in the right! Such is the law!

[*DICK and BILL run to MR. BURCHELL and fall on their knees before him, clasping him, crying.*]

DICK AND BILL.

Oh, dear, kind Mr. Burchell! Please don't hang us!

MR. BURCHELL.

[*A hand on the head of each.*] Bless your curly heads! Hang you?—Fudge!

[*He goes out hurriedly. The PRIMROSES exchange amazed glances, as if the situation defied expres-*

sion. OLIVIA and SOPHIA ruefully unpack the trunk. GEORGE seizes a hunk of bread from the table and eats ravenously.]

VICAR.

You have not made your fortune, then, my son?

GEORGE.

Not yet, sir!—I boarded a ship to Amsterdam with a view to teaching English to the Dutch. I felt they would love it to distraction! Accordingly I offered my services to every intelligent-appearing person I met with in the streets.—In vain! No one understood me!

[*The others show some amused interest.*]

MOSES.

And then?

GEORGE.

After many experiments I became usher in a school! Up early in the morning—browbeat by the mistress, tormented by the boys!—Can you dress hair? Have you the stomach of an ostrich? Can you sleep three in a bed? Then you won't do for usher in a school! May I die by an anodyne necklace, but I'd rather be under-turnkey in Newgate than usher in a school!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor boy! But don't give up hope!

GEORGE.

Hope, mother? No one was ever born with a better

knack of hoping! To-morrow I again set forth to conquer London, in the name of the beautiful Miss Wilmot—but, first, I will get you to set a stitch or so in these!

[Shows his rags. MRS. PRIMROSE laughs, and leads GEORGE off into the bedroom, R. 2. SOPHIA sadly carries off a bundle of clothes from the trunk. MOSES takes his coat off, gets milking cans, and goes.]

VICAR.

[Puts on his hat, takes his Bible, and goes, R. 1.] I have a sick parishioner to visit.—I'll be back soon!

[He goes out. The two children follow him.]

OLIVIA.

[Alone, kneeling by the trunk, buries her face in hands.]  
“When lovely woman stoops to folly”—Heigh ho!

SQUIRE.

[Looks in at the window. Echoes her.] Heigh ho!

OLIVIA.

[Looks up, rises.] Ned!

[Squire leaps in, meets her. They embrace.]

SQUIRE.

Why weeps my pretty one?

OLIVIA.

You ask? Do you not know that my sister and I go not to town with your cousins?

SQUIRE.

Was your heart so set on London?

OLIVIA.

Only because—because of——

SQUIRE.

Ranelagh, Vauxhall, the playhouses?

OLIVIA.

No, no! You—! I cannot bear the thought of parting!

SQUIRE.

Nor I!

OLIVIA.

But you will go away! What attraction can the country hold for you, come winter?

SQUIRE.

I mean to carry my attraction with me! 'Tis for that I am come!

*[Opens arms to her.]*

OLIVIA.

Ned! What mean you?—Oh, oh! For shame!

SQUIRE.

My good girl, what can I do? My fortunes are dependent wholly on the pleasure of my uncle, Sir William Thornhill, who insists on my paying my addresses to an heiress!

OLIVIA.

Then it is true!—Oh, go, go!

SQUIRE.

Then you do not love me?

OLIVIA.

I—I love you. But—without honour—Oh, sir!

*[Buries face in hands, cries.]*

SQUIRE.

Oh, curse these scruples! Olivia, my sweet.—Damn virtue!

OLIVIA.

No more, Mr. Thornhill! Pray go before—my father—mother—oh, the shame of it!

SQUIRE.

*[Wrapping her cloak about her.]* My own virtuous girl, I did but try you! Come! I know a priest who'll wed us secretly.

OLIVIA.

Wed us? Oh, sir! Ned, dearest! But—I will be wed by no priest but my own father!

SQUIRE.

Then you'll never be wed to me! Never, I tell you, unless we keep it secret till 'tis done!—Very good, then! I'll be off to my heiress!

*[Makes to go.]*



OLIVIA.

Oh, Heaven!—Ned, Ned! I love you so—I'll e'en do as you say. Oh, father, mother, forgive—

[SQUIRE hurries her out, by the door, rear, as MOSES, preceded by a clanking of milk pails, enters, R. 1, GEORGE renewed as to attire, enters from the bedroom with MRS. PRIMROSE and SOPHIA, R. 2. The VICAR enters, R. 1, takes off his hat, lays down his Bible, and mends the fire. MRS. PRIMROSE goes to the window, claps her hands and calls.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[Calling.] Children! Children!—Come to tea!

[SOPHIA lights the candles. The children come running in, rear. The family sit at table.]

VICAR.

[Lifting hand.] Let us give thanks to—but where is Olivia?

[All look about, wondering.]

DICK.

Sister Livy went off—

[Suddenly claps his hand before his mouth.]

BILL.

She went off with—

[Claps his hand before his mouth.]

VICAR.

Children! What mean you?

DICK.

He bade us not tell!

VICAR.

Come hither! Who bade you? Answer as before your God!

DICK AND BILL.

The Squire!

DICK.

He carried sister Livy off in a postchaise!

BILL.

She was crying!

[*Exclamation of horror from all. The VICAR quietly rises, and takes his hat and staff. GEORGE and MOSES go to him.*]

GEORGE.

Sir, trust me to avenge this wrong!

MOSES.

Father—let me go in your stead!

[*The VICAR shakes his head, then after a pause, speaks.*]

VICAR.

Nay, for then I might also lose a son. [*A hand on the shoulder of each.*] You, George, go seek your fortune, and you, Moses, guard the home till my return. I will go find my daughter. [*His voice breaks; a slight pause.*] But first, let us pray!

[*All, sobbing quietly, kneel, and bow their heads. The VICAR opens the Bible, and lifts his hand.*]

CURTAIN—END OF ACT III.

## ACT IV



## ACT IV

*Evening. A few weeks after Act III. A plain room in a wayside public house. At the back a door to the bar. On the left a door to the interior of the house. On the right, a window, a fireplace with fire. Elsewhere are sideboard with glasses, pewter, etc., and a table with writing materials of the period, and chairs. On the walls are framed prints, also a looking-glass.*

DISCOVERED: LANDLORD ushering in the VICAR, who looks tired and travel-worn.

LANDLORD.

What will your Honour be pleased to order?

VICAR.

[*Taking off his cloak, etc.*] A room for the night—and mine host's company over a pint of wine!

LANDLORD.

[*Bustles off, rear.*] Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!

VICAR.

[*Warming hands.*] Olivia—Olivia!

LANDLORD.

[*Enters from the bar with bottle, and gets glasses from*

*the sideboard.*] Your honour will have travelled far to-day?

VICAR.

This inn being on the road to the races—I suppose many gay parties stop here?

LANDLORD.

Well may you say so, sir. We have all kinds, at the Sign of the Harrow!

VICAR.

*[Pledging him.]* Your good health!

LANDLORD.

And yours, sir. Thank you, sir! As I was saying——

VICAR.

And bridal couples? For instance, a man, young, favoured of fortune—a profligate heart masked by every charm of person and address. The girl, nineteen, beautiful, high-spirited—innocent——?

LANDLORD.

*[Scratches his head.]* Well, no, sir. I can't exactly say——

LANDLADY.

*[Calling at the door, outside, on the left.]* Mr. Symonds  
Mr. Symonds——

LANDLORD.

My wife!

LANDLADY.

As usual, soaking with the guests while the house is going out of window!

LANDLORD.

Yes, my dear! Coming, coming—— [*Pauses to finish wine.*] I just was waiting on a guest!

[*Runs off at the left.*]

VICAR.

The same story. No one has seen her!

[*He sits before the fire, his head bowed in his hands.*

GEORGE, neatly but poorly attired, enters from the bar, and looks about. Seeing the VICAR'S back he addresses him, with a slightly theatric manner.]

GEORGE.

Your pardon, venerable sir, if I interrupt a learned revery. I solicit your patronage for a performance to-night of that dramatic masterpiece "The Fair Penitent," the part of Horatio to be undertaken by a young gentleman who has never before appeared upon the stage——

[*The VICAR has recognised GEORGE at beginning of this speech, but listens with interest to the close, then turns.*]

VICAR.

George!

GEORGE.

[*Amazed, embracing the VICAR.*] Father!—Any news of my sister?

VICAR.

None! None; none! But Olivia is my care. About yourself? Any signs of fortune?

[*Motioning him to take wine.*]

GEORGE.

[*Helping himself to wine.*] Signs, sir? Aye; signs of the most glowing description—though, so far, nothing but signs! Arrived again in London I fell in with an agent, who, in return for my last half guinea, promised me a position in America as Secretary to an embassy from the synod of Pennsylvania to the Chickasaw Indians. My heart beating high with hope, I was about to embark in the name of the beautiful Miss Wilmot, when by chance I learned that myself and my companions were being transported to America, there to be sold as slaves!

VICAR.

Horrible!

GEORGE.

Stung with the indignity, I was looking about me for any gulf that might be yearning to receive me, when I fell in with a company of strolling players who were seeking someone to replace one of their number who had fallen ill. While acting is not learned in a day, I, they declared, was born to tread the stage! The manager swears he has never seen any one who bids so fair to excel! Where experience in emotional expression fails me, he bids me shrug—as thus! Or behave as if convulsed with a fit of the gripes! [*He illustrates. The VICAR smiles.*] But I must



off to the playhouse, which in this instance consists of our landlord's barn!

VICAR.

Good luck, my lad!

GEORGE.

I thank you, sir—in the name of the beautiful Miss Wilmot!

*[Theatric exit, left. A commotion is heard outside the window, in which are distinguished the voices of DR. WILMOT and ARABELLA.]*

DR. WILMOT.

*[Angrily calling.]* Here, you landlord!

LANDLORD.

*[Outside.]* Coming, your Honour!

VICAR.

*[Looking from the window.]* What is this I see: a chaise broken down—with my old friend Dr. Wilmot, and my son's mistress, the lovely Arabella!

LANDLORD.

*[Opening the door, at the rear.]* In here, your Honour?

DR. WILMOT.

Certainly not, sirrah! A private room for us—the best in the house!

LANDLORD.

Of course, your Honour! This way, your Honour! Wife, attend the young lady!

[*The LANDLORD, LANDLADY, DR. WILMOT and ARABELLA are heard going upstairs, at the left. ARABELLA saying, "Oh, la, what an escape!" etc., and DR. WILMOT cursing the postilions, etc.*]

VICAR.

[*Relieved.*] Thank Heaven I do not have to meet them! How could I face them with this load of shame!—Olivia! Olivia!

LANDLORD.

[*Enters, bustling, from the left.*] I believe I was about to drink your Honour's health when——

VICAR.

[*Indicating the wine.*] Help yourself!

LANDLORD.

Thank you, sir! That gentleman who just arrived—Dr. Wilmot, a clergyman—high temper, sir! His daughter, a beauty and a fortune.

[*Speaking while pouring out the wine. He bows to the VICAR and drinks.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Calls very loud, outside on the left.*] Landlord! Is there no making any one hear!

LANDLORD.

[*Bustling to the door at the left.*] Yes, sir! Coming, your Honour!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Very loud, outside, left.*] When Squire Thornhill arrives, announce him to us instantly!

LANDLORD.

Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!

VICAR.

[*Overhearing, agitated, starts up.*] Squire Thornhill! Then it is true—— [*Stops the LANDLORD, who is going out.*] Another glass of wine with me, good friend!

LANDLORD.

Why, now, sir—Thank you, sir!

[*Pouring the wine.*]

VICAR.

You were saying, Dr. Wilmot, and his daughter—they are expecting some one?

LANDLORD.

The young lady's future husband, sir. He is to meet them here and ride on with them to pay a round of visits to their grand relations.

VICAR.

And his name is——?

LANDLORD.

His name?—Your Honour's good health!

[*Drinks.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Very loud, outside.*] Landlord! Egad, if that varlet does not bring me hot water——

LANDLORD.

Yes, sir! Coming, sir!

[*The sound of horse's hoofs is heard in the courtyard.*]

SQUIRE THORNHILL.

[*Calls outside.*] What ho! Boy!

LANDLORD.

'Tis he now, sir! Mr. Thornhill!

[*Bustling, opens the door, rear.*]

VICAR.

Now God give me patience to endure this!

SQUIRE.

[*Outside.*] Is there no one to attend me?

LANDLORD.

This way, Mr. Thornhill! In here, your Honour!

[*The SQUIRE, in riding dress, enters, rear.*]

SQUIRE.

I see by their equipage that Dr. and Miss Wilmot are already here!

LANDLORD.

Aye, sir! Their compliments, and they will be pleased.....  
to have you join them so soon as may be.

DR. WILMOT.

[*Angrily shouting, outside.*] Does that blockhead of a landlord want his skull broken?

LANDLORD.

Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!

[*Bustles off at the left.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Surveys himself in the looking-glass.*] A trifle travel-worn and fagged, but—now for the fair Arabella!

[*As he goes towards the left, the VICAR intercepts him.*]

VICAR.

Wait, Mr. Thornhill!

SQUIRE.

[*Starts, but recovers his self-control.*] Dr. Primrose! This encounter is unexpected as delightful! But what do you so far from home?

VICAR.

[*Not noticing the SQUIRE's extended hand.*] You ask? You! I am seeking my daughter! Where is my daughter?

SQUIRE.

[*Affecting surprise.*] Your daughter?

VICAR.

Olivia.

SQUIRE.

Why—where should Miss Olivia be except at home?

VICAR.

Home!—You took her from her home and us!

SQUIRE.

I? My good sir, this is madness! I protest——

LANDLORD.

[*At the door on the left.*] Pardon, Mr. Thornhill, but Dr. and Miss Wilmot are sitting down to a bit of supper and——

SQUIRE.

My homage to them, and 'tis neither the fault of eagerness nor of my appetite that I am not with them, but——

LANDLORD.

You were thrown from your horse, sir, and are changing your dress. Quite so, sir. Thank you, sir!

[*He disappears at the left.*]

SQUIRE.

Gad, Dr. Primrose; but for your gray hairs, your cloth——! Come, let me pass without more ado!

VICAR.

Not till you have answered me. Where is my girl?

SQUIRE.

Now strike me senseless if I read your riddle! If pretty Miss Livy has gone astray I'm sorry for you with all my heart! But why fasten the blame on me?

VICAR.

Because you came to the house and——

SQUIRE.

With her mother's approbation, encouragement, paid her a few trifling attentions! On my soul I'm sorry for you, Doctor, but—Miss Wilmot is waiting for me!

VICAR.

Miss Wilmot can spare you, sir! Her affections are fixed, not on you, but on another—my son George!

SQUIRE.

Preposterous pretension! A charming fellow George, but is he in a position to address a lady of Miss Wilmot's expectations?

VICAR.

I own that just as present he is not. However——

LANDLORD.

[*Appearing on the left.*] Pardon, Mr. Thornhill, but while their chaise is being repaired Dr. and Miss Wilmot will witness a performance by a company of strolling players in the barn—"The Fair Penitent"—the part of Horatio to be taken by a young gentleman who has never appeared upon the stage!

VICAR.

[*Aside.*] My poor George!

SQUIRE.

Anon! Anon! I am detained by a poor petitioner—one of my own tenants!

LANDLORD.

I made them some such excuse in your name, sir.

SQUIRE.

Gad, you're a very decent fellow. Here.

*[Gives gold to the LANDLORD.]*

LANDLORD.

Aye, sir. Thank your Honour!

*[He retreats, left, but lingers to listen.]*

SQUIRE.

A truce to this folly. Dr. Primrose, my word of honour I know nothing of your daughter. What more can you require?

VICAR.

Your written word, sir!

SQUIRE.

Oh, if that be all!—Landlord, writing materials!

LANDLORD.

*[Bustling, gets the writing materials from the side-board and places them on the table.]* Yes, sir!

*[The LANDLADY, outside, is heard scolding, OLIVIA faintly protesting.]*



LANDLADY.

Out upon you! Pack, this minute with a sassarara! Infamous piece of trumpery! Out, I say, or I'll give thee a mark thou won't be better of these months!

OLIVIA.

Oh, madam! Pity an unfortunate!

LANDLADY.

Pity on such as you, you vile creature! Out with you!

VICAR.

What is that?

LANDLORD.

My wife, sir, disposing of a young woman who has taken up lodgings here—but, I judge, by her over-civility, without cross or coin to bless herself with!

VICAR.

What manner of young woman  
[*Going to look, rear.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Interposes, looks.*] It is—It is Olivia! [*To himself, then to the VICAR.*] Ha, ha! As ill-favoured a bit of baggage as ever walked the earth—freckled, pock-marked, limping, squinting——

[*The LANDLORD coughs slightly, as if to say “There’s more in this than would appear!”*]

VICAR.

Poor soul!

SQUIRE.

[*To LANDLORD.*] Nathless—Here! Settle her reckoning, and let her go her way in peace! But mention not my name, or I shall be overrun with beggars and wantons!

VICAR.

[*Interposing, as the LANDLORD is about to take the money from the SQUIRE.*] Nay. Rather let me be the one to help the wretched woman! [*Gives the money to the LANDLORD.*] Give it in the name of a bereaved father and an unfortunate girl!

[*LANDLORD bows and goes out, rear.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Sits at the table, and writes. To himself.*] Gad, what an escape!

LANDLORD.

[*Appears at the rear.*] The young woman prays her blessing on your Honour!

[*The VICAR bows. The LANDLORD disappears.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Pushes the paper toward the VICAR.*] There! Does that content you?

VICAR.

[*Reads the paper, and bows in slow assent.*] We'll have this witnessed!

SQUIRE.

[*Dashes down the pen impatiently.*] Hang your punctilios! Is there no end to this?

[GEORGE, *outside on the left, is heard calling.*]

GEORGE.

Father! Father! [*Enters at the left.*] Oh, my dear father!

VICAR.

George! In the nick of time. But why this distress?

GEORGE.

I am one of those useless objects that nature designs to be thrown into her lumber room, there to perish in obscurity!—My attitude assumed—thus! My mouth open to deliver Horatio's opening line when—Lo! In the front row of chairs behold the beautiful Miss Wilmot! The lady shrieked and swooned—I burst into a flood of tears, and attempted to leap down to her rescue—but was forcibly held back by the manager, and as forcibly warded off by her angry father!

[*The SQUIRE bursts into laughter. GEORGE recognises him.*]

SQUIRE.

Your pardon, George! But, curse me if I ever—Ho, ho, ho!

GEORGE.

Mr. Thornhill! I pass over the insult to myself—but my sister—Where——

SQUIRE.

[*Starts up, furious.*] Now stab me if I'll stand this! First the old man, and now the young.

VICAR.

[*Interposing.*] George, Mr. Thornhill pledges his word of honour that he knows naught of our beloved!

[*Holds out the paper to GEORGE.*]

GEORGE.

[*Glances at it with a sneer.*] Aye, father! His word of honour! I was at the University with Mr. Thornhill! [*Seizes the SQUIRE.*] Answer me! Or I'll—

DR. WILMOT.

[*Outside, rear.*] Well, now, curse it all, if Mr. Thornhill despises our company——

ARABELLA.

[*Soothingly.*] Pray, sir, calm yourself!

GEORGE.

Her voice!

SQUIRE.

Curse it, let me go!

LANDLORD.

[*Appears at the rear.*] Pardon, gentlemen—but Dr. and Miss Wilmot are ready to depart!

SQUIRE.

I'll join them forthwith!

LANDLORD.

Aye, sir!

[*Disappears.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Struggling with* GEORGE.] Here, let me go!

GEORGE.

[*Holding the* SQUIRE, *as he goes, rear.*] We all will go—and tell Miss Wilmot Olivia's story! Come, father!

SQUIRE.

As you please! Publish the story of your sister's shame—but fasten it on me, and 'twill be interpreted as a vile trick to promote your own suit at my expense!

VICAR.

He is in the right, George!

[*Outside is heard the sound of coach wheels departing.*]

LANDLORD.

[*Appears at the rear.*] I told them you'd catch up with them, sir!

SQUIRE.

You're an honest knave! [*Throws the* LANDLORD *money.*]

LANDLORD.

True, sir! Thank you, sir!

[*Picks up the money and disappears.* GEORGE *has reluctantly yielded.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Taking his hat and whip.*] George, I deceived your father for his own heart's sake—but you will I not deceive!—Olivia wished to see the world. She left home with me. [*There is a hasty movement from GEORGE. The VICAR restrains him. The SQUIRE lifts his hand to stay GEORGE.*] Oh, 'twas indiscreet—but nothing more! I loved her—but feared to displease my uncle by choosing a bride not of my own station. However, as daily my passion for her increased, I should have defied prudence, interest—and married her—only——

[*He breaks off, as if unable to go on for emotion. The door on the left opens softly and slowly, and OLIVIA ill, worn, and poorly clad, enters a little way, as if about to supplicate forgiveness. Seeing the scene in progress she stands, listening, unseen by all.*]

VICAR.

[*Tense with emotion and expectation.*] Only——  
Well?

GEORGE.

Proceed! You would have married my sister—only?

SQUIRE.

She died!

[*OLIVIA starts, horror-stricken.*]

VICAR.

What—my darling Olivia dead?

GEORGE.

My sister dead? [*The SQUIRE nods yes, with bowed head. OLIVIA is about to go to the VICAR, but is irresolute. GEORGE speaks fervently, struggling with his sobs.*] Dead! Thank God!

VICAR.

The cup is bitter, but, aye! Thank God! [*OLIVIA gives a faint cry, as of a wounded animal and runs off at the left. All turn, but see nothing.*] What—I thought—I heard——!

GEORGE.

'Tis naught!

[*Goes to the VICAR and embraces him, in sorrowful silence. The SQUIRE bows, and goes out at the rear. His horse's hoofs are heard, galloping off.*]

VICAR.

God bless thee!—To-morrow I go home—home!

GEORGE.

And I'll off once more to London, in the name of——  
[*Breaks into sobbing, and goes out at the back. Moonlight. OLIVIA's song, very faint and ghostlike, is heard. The VICAR sits, brooding.*]

VICAR.

Home! Without my darling! [*Listens.*] What!—I could fancy—her voice—the little song—— [*He beats time. At the conclusion he breaks down, sobbing.*] Oh, God! Thy Will be done! But—— [*OLIVIA enters, softly, at the left, and stands watching the VICAR.*]

shamed, deserted, I'd rather know thee living—hold thee in these arms—— [OLIVIA *makes a slight sound. He looks up, and sees her, but is unable to believe her in the flesh.*] Olivia—thy phantom! Ah, dear Heaven—cheat me not!

[OLIVIA *goes to him, kneels beside him, puts his hands upon her head, as if entreating forgiveness, and clasps his knees.*]

OLIVIA.

Father!

VICAR.

My child!

CURTAIN—END OF ACT IV.



## ACT V



## ACT V

*Scene I, a prison cell. Scene II, outside the VICAR'S cottage. A few weeks after Act IV. A prison cell, dimly lighted by a high, grated slit of a window, and furnished only with a truss of straw for a bed. A jug for water stands in one corner. The only entrance is a grating door now standing open.*

DISCOVERED: MRS. PRIMROSE, SOPHIA, DICK and BILL, listening and weeping, while from the room beyond issue sounds of hooting, groaning, hissing and ribald laughter, through which the VICAR'S calm voice is heard, praying. *Enter MOSES.*

MOSES.

[*Embraces MRS. PRIMROSE.*] Cheer up, mother! See! Here are my week's wages. Good Mr. Flamborough is giving me steady employment!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Oh, my son!—But, hearken—thy father——

SOPHIA.

Mother—mother—They are becoming quieter! Father is winning them at last!

[*The noise has died down somewhat. All listen.*]

VICAR.

[*Heard, finishing the Lord's Prayer.*] "On earth as it is in Heaven—forever and ever. Amen!"

[*There is a murmur outside, part reverential, part derisive. The VICAR enters, his wig askew, his gown in disorder, carrying a Prayer-book and Bible. His aspect is serene, benign. All run to greet him, saying, "Oh, sir!—Oh, father!—Oh, papa!" etc.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Charles, my love!—Oh, how shamefully have these jail-birds used my husband.

[*Setting the VICAR'S dress right.*]

VICAR.

Nay, my dear. On the whole I had an excellent congregation. In church often I could scarce keep my hearers awake—but I encountered no such difficulty with my fellow-prisoners! [*The word "prisoners" causes the others to weep anew.*] Well, Moses, and how have you fared?

MOSES.

Well, sir. Good Mr. Flamborough will employ me steadily at liberal wage—and she sends you these delicacies with her love.

[*Showing a basket which he carries.*]

VICAR.

[*Quizzically.*] She?

MOSES.

[*Slightly confused.*] Miss Mollie Flamborough!

[*All laugh, tazing* MOSES.]

VICAR.

We will sup on them with grateful hearts. And after that——

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Interrupting, with a sudden idea.*] Would not Mr. Flamborough advance the money to pay our arrears of rent?

MOSES.

It seems that a delegation of my father's parishioners, headed by our good neighbour and Farmer Williams, have already waited on the Squire, offering to discharge the debt—but, in vain! Mr. Thornhill hath his own sinister motives for keeping my father a prisoner!

[MRS. PRIMROSE *begins to storm angrily.* The VICAR *soothes her.*]

It is thought that if you would submit yourself to the Squire, make no further demands on my sister's behalf, would free you!

VICAR.

What! Cease to demand justice for my child! Even though it was but a mock marriage, with which the villain deceived her, to Olivia it was real, binding. Before God she is his wife, and so shall I maintain if he keeps me in prison for it till I die!

[MRS. PRIMROSE *weeps louder.*]

Come, love; let us put our trust in the Lord!—So, my little ones, you still insist on sharing your father's cell?

DICK.

I will not leave my father!

BILL.

Nor I!

[*Each child takes hold of a hand of the Vicar.*]

VICAR.

Then it seems to me we are very well off!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Well off, forsooth! In prison!

VICAR.

Our minds are our own, and free. Our souls are God's. At least we enjoy the blessings of a clear conscience and one another's love!—But where is my darling Olivia?

SOPHIA.

Sir, my sister still feels herself unable to join our group.

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*With asperity.*] Small wonder! After the disgrace she hath brought on us!

VICAR.

Wife! This pride of heart! [*Shakes his finger at MRS. PRIMROSE, warningly.*] But, come. Let us give an hour to recreation.

MOSES.

A chapter from the ancients! On philosophy!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*With a gesture of disgust.*] Philosophy!

DICK.

The ballad of Patient Griselda!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Same gesture.*] Patient! Patience, forsooth!

BILL.

“Turn Gentle Hermit of the Dale!”

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Bless the child, ’tis forty stanzas long!

SOPHIA.

That moving fable by Mr. Gay that Mr. Burchell read to us, about two lovers, struck by lightning in each other’s arms!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Marry! Mr. Burchell!

[*Enter JENKINSON.*]

JENKINSON.

Pardon this intrusion, sir—but I would speak with you!

VICAR.

[*Inviting him in.*] Pray, sir, make yourself one of us!

JENKINSON.

[*Laughs shamefacedly.*] I doubt I am worthy of that!

VICAR.

I refuse my company to no man who desires it, sir.

JENKINSON.

Doctor—do you not recall me?

VICAR.

[*Smiles with benignity.*] I have some reason to, my friend. The first day I attempted to preach to my fellow-prisoners you spat on me. The second, you placed an obscene jest book between these sacred pages. The third, you picked my pocket of my spectacles. To-day you gave the message I brought your reverend attention!

[*Hand out to JENKINSON.*]

JENKINSON.

[*Hangs his head, not taking VICAR's hand.*] Sir—I am your penitent! But we met for the first time some months since, when you sold me a wall-eyed horse in exchange for a false note! [*The VICAR exclaims, amazed. JENKINSON turns to MOSES.*] And you, young master, I cozened out of a tailless colt, for a gross of worthless green spectacles!

[*All exclaim, amazed.*]

VICAR.

But—it was a venerable man——

MOSES.

Dressed as a clergyman.

[*JENKINSON laughs, sheepishly.*]

JENKINSON.

Ever my most fetching disguise!



VICAR.

I forgive your past rascality for your present honesty!  
[*They shake hands.*]

MOSES.

But—how came you to select me as your dupe? Me!

JENKINSON.

My lad, any sharper would have picked you out as the easiest of marks, the mother's darling that you were, with your broad black riband, and waistcoat of gosling green! [*All laugh at MOSES.*] But, to my errand. The jailer, who is the most humane of his kind that ever I have met, asks a favour of you—to share your cell with a young man to whom prison is a new experience!

VICAR.

By all means!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Indignantly.*] What! Share your wretched accommodations with a jail-bird!

VICAR.

My love, what am I!—Bid the young man join us,  
Mr.—

JENKINSON.

[*Supplying name.*] Ephraim Jenkinson—at your service.

[*Exit.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My love, you carry complaisance too far! Wretched as is our present state, when our son George returns from the West Indies with a fortune——

[*A clank of chains is heard. JENKINSON ushers in GEORGE, manacled. All exclaim, breathlessly.*]

GEORGE.

[*With eyes cast down.*] Oh, sir, pardon an unfortunate who——

ALL.

George!

GEORGE.

[*Looks up, recognises them.*] What! Father—mother! Here!

[*They all embrace him.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My boy! Then you are not on the road to fortune?

GEORGE.

Aye, mother!—On the road! Ever on the road! Meanwhile—[*He tries to take some food from the basket, but is unable because of his shackles. MRS. PRIMROSE feeds him. He speaks with his mouth full.*] After leaving you, sir, at the Sign of the Harrow, I went to London. I had always thought highly of the Muses, so I tried my hand at literature. I took up my pen——

VICAR.

In defence of monogamy, I trust!

GEORGE.

Hardly, sir, since I saw no prospect of my ever having even one wife! [*All give a slight laugh.*] No. I poured out my soul in poetry, only to find that it spells starvation!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

My poor boy!

[*Feeds him again.*]

GEORGE.

Accordingly I prepared to embark for the West Indies, in a beloved named. But before leaving England I felt that I must strike one blow for the honour of the family. Accordingly, I sent a challenge to Mr. Burchell!

[*All exclaim.*]

SOPHIA

But—why?

GEORGE.

For the infamous epistle in which he slandered you and poor Olivia.

SOPHIA.

George—we misread that letter. Those two creatures whom we took for ladies of quality—their names were not——

ALL.

[*Supplying the names.*] Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs.

SOPHIA.

They were two vile women of the town. It was our simplicity which that noble gentleman would not suffer to be imposed upon, our virtue he would not see contaminated!

GEORGE.

How I have wronged him! How gladly would I proffer him this hand—[*Holds out his manacled hands.*] But, in vain! My challenge miscarried. I found myself com-

mitted for attempted duelling, by order of Sir William Thornhill! [*All exclaim with sympathy.*] But why, sir, are *you* here?

VICAR.

A short tale, and shorter shrift. Imprimis, Mr. Thornhill lied to us.

GEORGE.

To you, sir—but to me—oh, hardly!

VICAR.

To both! Your sister lives.

GEORGE.

Olivia!—Thank God!

ALL.

Amen!

VICAR.

The villain deceived her with a mock marriage. Fearing that I should expose him to his uncle, Sir William Thornhill, who had returned to England, he took advantage of some slight arrears of rent to have his steward drive our cattle, and cast me into *gaol*, here to languish while his marriage with Miss Wilmot takes place. This is their wedding day!

GEORGE.

[*Burst of tears.*] Good heavens!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

There, there, love!

[*Offers to feed him.*]

GEORGE.

Nay, mother! Let me starve to death! In the name of the beautiful—Miss Wil——

[JENKINSON *ushers in ARABELLA in bridal array.*]

ARABELLA.

George!

GEORGE.

What! Do my senses play me false, or——

ARABELLA.

George!—I fear this is unmaidenly, but——

GEORGE.

Arabella! Come to these arms—[*Tries to open his arms.*]—I mean, this breast!

[*They embrace.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Is heard approaching, in a rage.*] Where is that shameless hussy!—Where——

ARABELLA.

[*Shrieks.*] Oh, lud! Papa!—I am undone!—Protect me, George!

[*DR. WILMOT enters.*]

DR. WILMOT.

Where are you, Miss!—Unhand her, sirrah!—Let go, Miss! [*Seizes ARABELLA.*] On the way to the church! Zounds, I've twenty minds to——

ARABELLA.

[*Clinging to GEORGE.*] Papa, even the crushed worm will turn!

DR. WILMOT.

Aye, but you're not a worm; you're my daughter! and

you're only crushed by hugging that penniless young fool!  
Here, you come with me, or——

ARABELLA.

Papa! I tell you I do not love Mr. Thornhill!

DR. WILMOT.

Gadzooks, Miss, you will love him! I insist on it! If you don't come peaceably and wed the husband of my choosing, voluntarily, I'll get an order from Sir William Thornhill to have you put in the stocks!

[ARABELLA shrieks.]

GEORGE.

Oh, heaven, sir! This is too cruel!

VICAR.

Dr. Wilmot, pray, forbear!

DR. WILMOT.

Oh, Charles Primrose—Charles Primrose—this all springs from your absurd adherence to Monogamy!

[All talk at the same time. JENKINSON ushers in  
MR. BURCHELL.]

MR. BURCHELL.

Good morrow, friends!

[All exclaim with surprise.]

DR. WILMOT.

[Overjoyed.] The man and the hour! I was just about to seek you, to——

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Checks* DR. WILMOT.] A moment, Doctor, before we undo this coil. Provided she'll have me, may I take this young woman to wife? [*Indicates* SOPHIA.]

VICAR.

[*Takes* SOPHIA'S *hand*.] I could not give her more willingly.

[MR. BURCHELL *turns to* MRS. PRIMROSE, *as if asking her opinion*.]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Grudgingly*.] Well, sir; seeing what we have sunk to, I fear the poor girl won't get a better chance!

[MR. BURCHELL *smiles, and tucks* SOPHIA'S *hand under his arm*.]

MR. BURCHELL.

Now to this pair of lovers.

[*Indicates* GEORGE *and* ARABELLA. JENKINSON *ushers in the* SQUIRE *in wedding attire*.]

SQUIRE.

Dr. Wilmot, Miss Wilmot! What means this? On my way to the church I received a summons to meet you here—here, of all places for a love tryst! [*Suddenly perceives* MR. BURCHELL, *and starts with frightened surprise*.] Good God, sir! You?

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Nods assent*.] 'Twas I who sent for you! Ned, do you love Miss Wilmot?

SQUIRE.

I protest, sir——

MR. BURCHELL.

No evasions! Suppose her penniless——

SQUIRE.

[*With a slight, sneering laugh.*] As, in a way, she is, sir. Last night, according to legal forms, her wealth was transferred to my custody! I shall not hesitate to claim it, whether she comes to church with me or not.

[*Exclamation from all.*]

DR. WILMOT.

[*Threatening SQUIRE with his stick.*] Of all hardened villains——

[*He chokes, unable to finish.*]

GEORGE.

My own! If possible I love thee a thousand times better penniless!

DR. WILMOT.

Then take her, sir!—As for you, Ned Thornhill——

[*Again threatening.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

One moment, Dr. Wilmot. Jenkinson, you have a word to say, I think.

JENKINSON.

[*In the manner of one paying old scores.*] That conveyance of Miss Wilmot's fortune is not worth the parch-



ment 'tis writ on, Squire. [*All turn to JENKINSON, eagerly.*] You already have a wife!

[*General exclamation.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Hurriedly.*] Sirrah! Explain!

JENKINSON.

Aye. She that was Miss Olivia Primrose.—'Twas no mockery, that ceremony! To pay off some old scores, I thought to have a whip over you, so fetched a real priest!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

Then my girl is an honest woman!

JENKINSON.

As ever book and ring could make one!

[*The PRIMROSES show devout thankfulness, which is also shared by ARABELLA.*]

SQUIRE.

Hm!

[*He shows a conflict of emotions, walking to one side of the cell, and standing in thought, his face turned to the wall.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

[*To the others, in a subdued tone.*] Hst! I'll test him!—Whatever I say, contradict me not! [*The others assent by sign, and listen interestedly.* MR. BURCHELL walks toward the SQUIRE.] But, never fear, Ned. Thy

matrimonial fetters need not bind thee!—Wed whom thou desirest!—Olivia is dead!

[*All start, as if to contradict.* MR. BURCHELL *motions them to silence.*]

SQUIRE.

[*Turns slowly toward MR. BURCHELL.*] Nay, sir!—I but said it for a purpose!

[*OLIVIA, ushered by JENKINSON, appears at the entrance and stands there, listening, seen by all except the SQUIRE.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

As you thought! But grief and shame have done their fatal work!—The innocent victim of your profligacy, your wife Olivia is no more!

SQUIRE.

[*Looks at him, as if to say, “Is this true?”* MR. BURCHELL *bows as if to say, “It is true!”* The SQUIRE *bursts into sudden tears.*] Oh!—God, forgive me!—I loved her!—Olivia!

OLIVIA.

[*Going to him.*] Ned!

[*The SQUIRE turns, and seeing her, gives a glad cry. They embrace silently. The others weep.*]

MR. BURCHELL.

[*With a sudden, cheerful change of tone.*] But, come! This is no time for tears! My good Jenkinson, inform the jailor that I have ordered a festive dinner for the prisoners. Meanwhile these two captives are released.

JENKINSON.

[*Bowing low.*] Aye, your Lordship!

[*The PRIMROSES have shown amazement all along, at MR. BURCHELL'S assumption of authority. They now exclaim with undisguised curiosity.*]

MRS. PRIMROSE.

But—prithee, sir, who are you to work such wonders?

MR. BURCHELL.

Dear madam, just a philosopher, and your humble servant!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Agape at MRS. PRIMROSE'S question.*] Why, bless my soul; who but—my old friend——

SQUIRE.

My uncle—

JENKINSON.

Sir William Thornhill!

[*Amazed exclamations from the PRIMROSES. MRS. PRIMROSE makes an abject curtsy to MR. BURCHELL, who laughingly reassures her. General rejoicing follows.*]

SCENE II—EPILOGUE.—*A curtain is lowered in front of the group, shutting out the prison scene, and showing the exterior of the VICAR'S cottage, in a wintry scene. The sounds of pipe and tabour are heard approaching from one side, mingled with voices of VILLAGERS singing a Christmas carol. Enter VILLAGERS, headed by*

MR. FLAMBOROUGH, *his family, and* FARMER WILLIAMS, *and at the same time from the opposite side enter the group from the prison, appropriately coupled, GEORGE now being free of shackles. As the two parties meet the VILLAGERS set up a shout of rejoicing and welcome.*]

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Meeting the VICAR, with outstretched hand.*] Dear Vicar——

VICAR.

Friend!—Good neighbours all!

VILLAGERS.

O welcome! Welcome! Welcome home!

VICAR.

[*His hand lifted, as if in blessing.*]

The God who heeds a sparrow's fall,  
Hath brought me safely back!

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Cheerily, to MRS. PRIMROSE.*]

Come, come!

A glass of gooseberry, good dame,  
To toast all maids who'd change their name!

[*There is general laughter. MRS. PRIMROSE goes to one side, as if to enter the cottage from the back, and reappears with a tray of wine which she passes around. Meanwhile the couples range themselves,*

MOSES *between* MISS MOLLIE FLAMBOROUGH *and* JENKINSON; FARMER WILLIAMS *by* MISS FLAMBOROUGH; ARABELLA *between* DR. WILMOT *and* GEORGE; OLIVIA *with* SQUIRE; SOPHIA *with* MR. BURCHELL; *the two children clinging to* MRS. PRIMROSE'S skirts.]

ARABELLA.

Dear sisters, if 'tis George you love,  
Though cruel sire would give you Ned——

DR. WILMOT.

[*Protesting.*] Now, daughter!

ARABELLA.

Hush, sir!

DR. WILMOT.

[*Protesting.*] Gods above!

ARABELLA.

[*Puts her hand over his mouth, and continues.*] Just  
cling to George, or die unwed!

GEORGE.

[*Drinking to* ARABELLA.]

Oh, yet I'll conquer fortune, fame,  
Sweet, in your name——

DR. WILMOT.

[*Making himself heard.*] Or change of name!

OLIVIA.

*[Accompanying herself on a guitar, pensively.]*

When lovely woman stoops to folly,  
And finds too late that men betray,  
What charm can soothe her melancholy;  
What art can——

*[Voice quavers with emotion]*

SQUIRE.

*[Tenderly interrupting.]*

Dear Olivia, stay!

I promise you, reformed, a rake

A faithful, loving spouse will make!

*[He drinks to OLIVIA.]*

MOSES.

*[To the audience.]* When at a fair a horse you'd  
sell——

JENKINSON.

*[Interrupts, addressing MOSES.]*

Don't wear a coat of gosling green!

Keep eyes alert, and wits as well!

MOSES.

*[To the audience, taxing JENKINSON.]* Beware of men  
of holy mien!*[Laughter at the expense of JENKINSON.]*

MRS. PRIMROSE.

*[Rather tartly to MOSES.]*

However wide your learning's range,  
Don't——

[*All the characters finish the sentence.*]

Don't take green spectacles in change!

[*ALL laugh, pledging MOSES. MISS MOLLIE FLAMBOROUGH hands him a pair of green spectacles which he puts on.*]

SOPHIA.

[*Addressing the audience.*]

To merit, though in lowly guise,  
O never your affection grudge!

MRS. PRIMROSE.

[*Handing MR. BURCHELL wine.*]

Sir William, how you must despise  
My pride of heart; my insults!

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Kindly.*] Fudge!

[*General laughter. All pledge MR. BURCHELL and SOPHIA.*]

DICK AND BILL.

[*To MR. BURCHELL, one on each side.*]

When to our sister you are wed  
Will you still bring us——

[*MR. BURCHELL nods yes; they feel in his pockets, and exclaim, drawing out cakes of gingerbread.*]

Gingerbread!

MR. BURCHELL.

[*Toasting VILLAGERS and AUDIENCE.*]

Come! Here's to all the lads and lasses!

[*General murmur of pleasure.*]

MR. FLAMBOROUGH.

[*Raising glass, pledges.*] Shakespeare and the Musical Glasses!

[*There is a general laugh, in which the PRIMROSES join.*]

VICAR.

[*Toasting.*] Virtue, content, a loving wife——

DR. WILMOT.

[*Interrupting.*] One at a time, sir! .

VICAR.

[*Shakes head in mild contradiction.*] One for life!

[*General exclamation of pleasure and rejoicing.*  
*Pipe, tabour sound.*]

[CURTAIN.]

[END OF PLAY.]









